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# THE STORY OF TWO SALONS

N. H. CHASE,  
ALBANY, N. Y.



THE  
JOURNAL OF  
THE  
ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE





JOUBERT

*From a portrait in the possession of the Joubert family*

THE STORY  
OF  
TWO SALONS

BY

EDITH SICHEL

AUTHOR OF "WORTHINGTON JUNIOR," A NOVEL

EDWARD ARNOLD

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"Ayant l'esprit et le cœur hospitaliers."  
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*August 23, 1895*

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## INTRODUCTION

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THERE are some secrets which the past keeps jealously from us. The mystery of Greek beauty is guarded by marble gods and goddesses; the colour and sunlight of the old Italian masters are buried with them beyond our reach in Venetia and Tuscany; the devout science which made austerity lovely in Fugue and Prelude seems no less a lost possession; and, search as we will, the secret of the art of society lies hidden in France, in the Paris of the eighteenth century, in the graves of tender ladies and frilled philosophers, as sparkling as they were profound. A few men and women there were who carried the tradition of last century into this one. It inspired them to preserve the glamour, the grace of the Old World, and to combine them with the new force, the graver purpose born of the Revolution. But the ponderous spirit of the

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# TO VIVU ALPHONSA

## INTRODUCTION

Forties, railways and regular education, chased the last dear ghosts away, nor have they returned, even for an hour. It is stirring, however, to summon them before us ; to see them as they painted themselves and each other, from every side, in many memoirs, in countless letters, still warm with life and its yearnings ; and to discover, if that were possible, the secret of the charm they shed about them.

As we read, as we gaze at their portraits written or painted, a subtle atmosphere steals round us, sweet, penetrating, radiant, indefinable. We can hardly tell what it is made of—of many things, without doubt : of the salt of men's wisdom and the flame of their passions ; of the soft brilliance of women's wit ; above all, of the fragrance of women's hearts, single, reckless, and faithful in their devotion, yet so refined and so piercing in their insight that they seemed better than brains for all human knowledge. For they *thought* with their hearts, these women, swiftly and deeply, thus readjusting—sadly enough for them—the balance between themselves and their Encyclopædist lovers, who so often felt with their brains.

This difference certainly contributed to the excitement of their intercourse and to the in-

cessantly fresh emotion that kept it alive. Yet there was more than this. Beneath the turbulence and the foam of sentiment and wit there flowed the current of intense feeling; and it was this fact that gave society then a vitality which it has never had since. It is common to consider it as an institution in itself shallow and frothy; but it has only become so because it has no deep truth below the surface; when it had, it proved that it possessed a soul. The feelings that make society now are but bubbles, and we are for ever mournfully longing to substitute close intercourse for our system of crowded drawing-rooms, by which we see everybody and nobody at the same moment. In those days, close intercourse and society were identical; the salons only held in the evenings a collection, large or small, of the couples, trios or quartets, who met and loved and lived together every day—and every group of lovers or friends knew and cared for every other group.

There was no compromise amongst them. The force of their feelings, whether of love or friendship, lay in their concentration. Concentration, though it allows of wit, shuts out humour; and humour is in many ways inimical to passion. English humour, at any rate, would not permit

the exaggerations of behaviour and of thought which form part of salon habits ; or those daily comings and goings which interrupt the ordinary routine. *We* only allow amusing conversation at stated hours ; and even then, we do not enjoy it till we have become accustomed to the person with whom we converse. This may partially account for the fact that brilliant country houses, from the day of Sir William Temple downwards, have always represented our most successful form of intercourse, as well as hospitality, and have flourished where salons do not. When we *have* had salons, like Lord Holland's, Lady Blessington's, or Mr. Nassau Senior's, they have too frequently been affected by the practical English character. Bills were passed there, before they were heard of in Parliament ; duties were removed from imports, whilst two Frenchmen would be discussing the theory of Protection. Beneath the wit there was business ; romance and emotion were not prominent features ; and these dinner-tables represented good company, discreet in its relations, rather than vivid intercourse, so close as to be fusion. Our insular reserve, perhaps also our Northern morals, would never admit those essential intimacies into general society. For this reason, possibly, Miss Burney, who had,

if not a salon, at least a *parlour*, could not go beyond it; whilst Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale, who collected a circle, and seem the nearest approach to their contemporaries in Paris, made no lasting effect upon social life. The same may be said of the Miss Berrys, who, although they gathered together all the distinguished men and women of their long day, from Horace Walpole to Thackeray, were unable to transmit their mantle to younger shoulders.

As for the poets and wits of Queen Anne's reign, they did not invite women to Wills' and White's; though the club life which they created was as original and vigorous as the salon life in France, and much more suited to the English ideal of good comradeship and intellectual exchange.

The disappearance of the salon world in France is a greater mystery caused by subtler reasons. It would be trite to dwell on the complex conditions of modern existence which make leisurely intercourse, passionate correspondence—perhaps passion itself—impossible. Newspapers and reviews choke intellectual discussion, and men instinctively reserve the expression of their ideas till they are paid for them. Sympathies and possibilities have widened everywhere; there

seems more to do and less time to do it in, than ever before. Yet we feel that the French always possess the material—the temperament for society—though the conditions which developed it are past. France may, or may not, rank as a political force, but it must for ever be acknowledged that it has the genius for intellectual charm—a charm which found complete expression in the society of last century, and owed its sway not only to suave manners and fastidious senses, but still more to a nice discrimination and to true beauty of spirit.

This is, at any rate, the golden bequest which these Frenchwomen have left us. They spent their lives in loving; they made love into a finished art. In the lives of those they loved, there was no fact, from an omelette to the Theory of Perfectibility, which their hearts did not master. When they did not meet once or twice a day, they wrote letters as concentrated in feeling as they were keen in discussion of current topics or of human nature.

It is strange to think how many must have been destroyed. One collection alone, belonging to a certain M. Pondeveyille, contained 16,000 epistles from one lady, in a correspondence of only eleven years. His executors wisely crammed

them into the oven. "Persons have been known here," writes Horace Walpole from Paris, "who wrote to one another four times a day." It would almost seem as if their days—perhaps their nights—must have been longer then than now.

Their letters to their friends differ little from those to their lovers, for their ardour embraced not only one, but every kind of emotion with the same zest ; if friendship was a passion with them, so was hero-worship. Voltaire, Rousseau, Buffon, Fontenelle, and many lesser lights, had their votaries who wrote pages to them on their special subjects and on their personal virtues ; pages crude and often absurd in their adulation, but always sincere. An Englishwoman would scold at such waste of firing upon their altars, and declare that such gush must be incompatible with sincerity ; but warmth and truth of expression *can* go together, and these women led the life of sentiment, not of sentimentality.

Society, however, cannot subsist on sentiment alone. It must be amused and absorbed, or it would dissolve ; there must be intercourse of mind between the men and women of whom it is made. Never, indeed, was intellectual excitement so potent or so sustained as in these eighteenth-century circles ; never were women keener and

wiser in thought, or happier in expressing it. Philosophers, men of science, men of letters, consulted them upon the weightiest topics, and they replied with the seriousness of men—and the grace of women. The secret of their skill defies analysis—perhaps it depended on the delicate interweaving of mind and feeling. But whether it lay in the fact that their intellects were so emotional, or that their emotions were so intellectual, it is now impossible to say.

And if (as was, alas, frequent) they carried the love which absorbed them beyond the bounds, is it for us to judge them, these “ladies of old time, noble and charming even in their errors”? They lived, as M. d’Haussonville has pointed out to us, at a moment when there was no religious reason for morality. Old beliefs had crumbled and new ones were not yet set up, yet women’s hearts felt the same need for self-sacrifice and for worship as before. They sought their temple in human affections, and made their gods of frail men, trying “even in their weaknesses to recover and to attain a certain ideal whose confused image their eyes had half beheld.” Carried away by the adoration for intellect then prevailing, it is not surprising that they should have stepped out of the Narrow Way, which for them led no-

whither, and transgressed the limits which they attributed to conventionality.

And when everything is said, they remain supreme in charm. Too much stress is perhaps laid upon their enchanted setting—upon the wax candles, the cupids, the powder and the brocade. Such trappings were indeed less prominent than is supposed, and belonged especially to the luxurious days of the Regent or of the Pompadour. The salons of which we write were often shabby, though the curtains and hangings were chosen with care to suit their owners' complexions, and their very atmosphere breathed refinement. But furniture and draperies alike were dominated and overwhelmed by personality—by the faces that expressed it, many in number, infinitely different. We can see them now—some fair, some wise, some mocking, some plain, and a few pensive—with the tender light of memory in their eyes, all alike animated by the glow of aspiration and desire. We can hear their words, as they lose themselves in important subjects. They are talking gravely and well, eagerly, yet soberly, to the *philosophes*, the men of letters, who sit or stand at their feet, their great heads covered by festive periwigs; or a fencing-match of wit is going on between them, and *bons mots* fall crisp and bright



from their lips, probably leaving the women victorious; or they are analysing, through and through, the character of some friend, with the finest shades of a fine modern novelist—with an ease, a grace, a gift of apt expression all their own.

There is old Madame du Deffand of the stiletto-tongue, who with every contrivance to possess a heart, never acquired one; and there is the gracious-hearted Madame d'Houdetot, who made an extra sense of sensibility; and the naughty Marquise de Boufflers, who wished to retire to a desert island with her "eighty best friends and twenty-five more who were absolutely necessary to her"; and Madame Necker, intense, courageous, clinging, hiding her fiery feelings in habits of austerity. Form after form flits in and out of her salon: little Madame Suard, seeking heroes and finding them everywhere; Madame Geoffrin, benevolent, cold, warm-witted, and unlettered; Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, too vehement to be constant; and, last but not least, known and loved by a few, with tiny figure, pale face, and profound eyes, Pauline de Montmorin, daughter of the Minister, in all the sweetness of her eighteen years—to be heard of later as Pauline de Beaumont, the friend of Joubert, the

lover of Chateaubriand, the heart of the shabby little salon in the Rue Neuve du Luxembourg.

We, who know their future, look upon them all with a yearning to warn them—with dismay. For towards their magic shore comes rolling slowly but surely the tide of blood which swept so many away. It was these same women, living on sensibility and luxury, who most of them endured loss, imprisonment, death, with holy patience and supreme courage. But for the moment, are they not here, gracious and gay, holding out their white hands to us, beckoning? I look up to greet them—and they have vanished, and suddenly I realise that they are dead—that they are gone, never to revive.

We have good things unknown to them, more important than theirs. Our faith is wider and warmer; our outlook larger. We have sturdier morals and more ardent activities. But the lesser good must go. Iphigenia had to be sacrificed for our victory—and charm of life has fled to some hidden temple. It will be urged as consolation for this loss, that matter is more than manner: yet the way in which we express existence is also of importance.

It is our sense of this which makes us venture to revive some of the less-known salons of

eighteenth - century Paris. The Suards and Pauline de Beaumont are names unfamiliar to English ears. But the byways are more adventurous than the highroad, and provide us with many unexpected points of view. For this reason alone they would be worth pursuing ; still more so if they could but impart some perception of "that sociability which distinguishes France ; that charming interchange of intellect, as easy as it is rapid ; that absence of bitterness or prejudice ; that inattention to fortune or to reputation ; that natural levelling of all ranks ; that equality of mind which makes French society incomparable, and redeems its faults."

**THE  
LITTLE HOUSEHOLD OF THE SUARDS**



## CHAPTER I

SOME persons, we should perhaps say personalities, are born to rule a circle; other people, socially important, if not famous, are, by nature, agreeable pegs on which to hang associations more illustrious than themselves. Their gift is to provide, rather than to talk—to serve, and not to dominate. If they do not make history, they compile it, and allow their own names to disappear amidst those of their authorities.

Such were the Suard, now seldom mentioned, who began humbly, loved culture, and lived simply, gaining reputation by their simplicity, so that they were known amongst the great as "The Little Household." Suard's solid literary judgment and impartial mind—his independence, his sympathy, and his reticence, together with his achievements as a journalist, gave him real moral and intellectual value. He was a born editor, and as such,

far more beloved by writers and thinkers than they were by each other. An excellent listener, he had also an express power of making and keeping good friends both amongst men and women—a power in nowise lessened by a certain coldness which prevented his taking offence, or seeing people too closely. Rapidly becoming a universal counsellor, he certainly exercised more power in that way than as Permanent Secretary to the Academy, an office filled by him in later years. Marmontel was his affectionate colleague; Holbach and Helvétius were his admirers; Grimm, Diderot, and d'Alembert his enthusiastic friends; Voltaire approved of him; Buffon was devoted to him; Condorcet lived for years with him and his wife; and last, but not least, he kept the peace with Rousseau. As a confidant of stormy-hearted ladies, specially of the witty Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, he had quite a reputation; whilst his love for English books and constitutional methods attracted to his house all the English and Scotch in Paris. He translated the histories of Robertson, and corresponded constantly with him; he was intimate with David Hume, Horace Walpole, and the Edgeworths; Garrick adopted him as his crony, and did not like parting with him for a single hour during his stay in Paris.

Little Madame Suard, on her side, had a large heart, and just enough of inspired folly to attain the popularity of the flatterer, by the honest means of the hero-worshipper. It must also be added that she possessed considerable personal beauty. Her adulation of Voltaire, Condorcet, and a host of others, though usually absurd, was at least as sincere as it was acceptable ; and if she was not made for posterity, she was specially created for a warm and living present. Protected by the potent Madame Geoffrin and the conscientious Madame Necker, the young couple soon became the fashion throughout the Encyclopædist world. Their poverty, too, represented a novel amusement to their patrons, and an acceptable vent for the kindness and philanthropy of which there was then so much that could find no outlet.

She emulated her husband as a reviewer, but loved literature better than she judged it. She could, however, write prettily. There is distinct charm, for instance, in a set of letters to her husband (written for publication), in which she describes a man-friend she has made in his absence, who spends every evening with her by the fireside, counselling her and taking possession of her mind. This Mentor she finally reveals to



be no other than Seneca, whose works she has been reading. Suard was probably not much alarmed; he knew that his influence over her was complete and lasting. She was for ever in a flutter, and he was for ever calming her. Had he not been as sensible as he was, his certainty of her would have amounted to fatuity, for her little rages—even her flirtations—left him serene in the consciousness that they only arose from her wounded love for him. At one time—perhaps rather bored by her affection—he is said to have neglected her for literary enterprises; she, who had many admirers before her marriage, knew how to revenge herself. Suard showed no disapproval. One day she told him she had ceased to love him. “*That* will come back,” he coldly replied. “But it is because I love another,” she cried. “*That* will pass,” was all his answer.

But no mention of any disagreement disturbs her Honeymoon Memoirs of their married life, and they were, in truth, a very happy, if somewhat over-anxious couple: as English, strange to say, in their matrimonial as in their political ideals. They were the Edwin and Angelina of the French literary world. If one of them was out five minutes beyond the hour appointed, the

other was immediately ready to institute a search-party ; he always asked her permission to sup out without her,—in the full conviction of her never-failing consent,—though she did not permit him to desert her at *soirées*. He used to beg her to follow his example and dine out with *her* friends, but she preferred solitude. She has no words for his wisdom in dealing with her faults, especially her besetting sin of greediness. “I only digested well beneath a cloudless sky,” she tells us ; and his tones were so sweet when he implored her not to eat too much, that she instantly took back the plate she had sent for more of some dainty on the table.

But as in the details of love (only fit for the hearth which they grace) the best people frequently fall below their own mental level ; so in its bigger events they often rise above themselves—and, for her husband, Amélie Suard was always courageous, attaining during the Revolution a pitch of heroism remarkable in such a timid soul. Fed on the best literature, the choice of which he never ceased to govern, great ideas found a congenial soil in her heart and bore fruit in due season. But Suard, whilst he valued her eagerness, was by no means blind to her deficiencies of mind. She had no taste for the analytic spirit

of the day, preferring romantic or didactic literature.

"She is no more capable of seizing a humorous point than an abstract idea," he once wrote. "She would not be aware that she was entertaining a fop or a fool, unless she discovered that she was being bored, and then she is capable of dying of him, not of laughing at him. She has no social tact—a quality which does not come from the heart, but from the mind, and often from cunning. But put her in the midst of natural beauty, and you will find that scenery, whether it be grand or merely sweet and pleasing, will equally take possession of her imagination. She has the power of describing a thing immediately and of reproducing it vividly months afterwards. A truth pointed out will escape her; a truth expressed by Bossuet or Montesquieu, in all its breadth and height, remains in her mind for ever. She reads every novel and every history, and never forgets them. Vauvenargues does not feel better than she does what distinguishes Racine from Corneille, and the most eloquent panegyrists of Fénelon have not come up to what she feels as she reads him. She is too happy when she reads beautiful verse or prose to have any temptation to write herself."

In early life, Suard had gone through adventures so striking that they would have been adequate to a bigger reputation. His character was certainly more remarkable than his mind, and wherever his will was exercised, he came off triumphant. Born at Besançon, about 1734, his life knew no events till his nineteenth year, when a friend of his had a duel with the nephew of the War Minister of the day. The latter was killed; the other man fled at once; and Suard, who was witness, and the only person on the spot, was arrested as a murderer. Too noble to betray his friend, he vouchsafed no answer to any question, and was consigned first to a terrible cell in the city prison, where he nearly died of fever; then, on his continued silence, and through the personal spite of the governor of the town, he was sent away to the fortress of the Ile Sainte Marguerite, a kind of Bastille, where many men remained buried alive and unheard of for years. His very parents were ignorant of his whereabouts, and writing materials were an impossibility in his deep dungeon, with its one window-slit high up in the massive wall.

Here he endured the worst misery, with a fortitude beyond his eighteen years. The rascally governor of the fortress was allowed five hundred

francs a year for each prisoner, but only used three hundred, so that, in addition to darkness, hardship, and solitude, the boy was almost starved. A nameless horror took possession of him. To keep his health he danced alone in his dungeon, and fenced with no foils but his own arms and no other opponent than the stone wall. One night, when his oppression of spirit had become well-nigh unbearable, he fell asleep, and in his slumbers heard an ineffable melody played on a flute which pierced straight to his heart. When he awoke, his vague horror had vanished, and cheerfulness returned. His dream was indeed a good omen, for soon after this the governor sent him pen and paper, a Spanish Bible, and Bayle's Dictionary,—a combination which implies more goodwill than literary habit in their owner. It could not, however, have been luckier. Suard plunged into a close study of the Scriptures, especially of the race of Israel, resulting in a profound and ineradicable faith in the existence of God which influenced him all through life. Then he turned to Bayle, and proceeded to make a revised edition of his work, a compendium of universal history strengthening both to the brain and judgment of the student. His position in prison, between the Bible and Bayle, was significant of his whole

mental attitude in later life, and may have had some power in deciding it.

Diversion from his scholarly labours had also to be invented. He discovered that, by slipping and scrambling, he could reach the porthole in the wall and look out upon the Mediterranean. Here, day after day, he watched the gleaming sails of unattainable ships, and knew that human beings were near, but that they could neither see nor hear him. Here, too, he daily beheld the bathers; these, he rather feverishly tells us, generally consisted of beautiful floating ladies, whose distant charms seem slightly to have overpowered his brain. He became a prey to all kinds of visions, which he sensibly recognised as the symptoms of a weakened mind. Trembling (as he describes) with the fear of insanity, he resolved to adopt some severer discipline than his studies, and took to arithmetic and to drawing mathematical problems upon the walls. A great mathematician told him in after days that, out of his own intellect, he had evolved and demonstrated the most abstruse logarithms. But even these matter-of-fact figures "began to appear to him as if they were on fire"; he was at the end of his tether.

One day, at this period, his door was pushed

open, and a handsome young man entered. This was the Chevalier de Luz, a fellow-prisoner for some disgraceful crime, a bold rake and fascinating scoundrel, who had (we are told) "a genius for vice," but who was at any rate good company, and now visited Suard every evening. He knew all the tricks of the prison, and promised that if Suard wrote to his parents, the letter should reach its destination. Suard did write several times, and the Chevalier kept his word, but used the correspondence in order to extort money from Suard's father, on the strength of which, by astounding audacity, he escaped, leaving Suard behind him. But the latter was now in communication with those interested in his welfare; influence was brought to bear, authorities were stirred, with the result that, after eighteen months of imprisonment, the young man was set free.

He was now about twenty, of height above the average, with "rather small eyes, full of mind, sweetness, and *finesse*." His graceful address, convincing sincerity, and power of self-possession without coldness, had the effect of charming people at first sight. He was made for Paris—and to Paris he shortly went.

In our days, a young man of parts, who comes

to a large town, can hardly prove his claim to talent without severe struggle with many competitors. It is strange, in comparing that age with ours, to find how different things were then. Anybody of moderate gifts and ambitions arriving in Paris, could be pretty certain of making a mark, whilst real merit was never left to itself. There was doubtless less competition, and therefore more scope for able men. Journalism, which now rejects as superfluous so many unfortunates, was then in its first youth and crying for recruits. Mind was at a premium, and patronage, in its most amiable stage, no longer a tyrant, but still a protector.

But the most important reason seems to have lain in the essential arrangements of eighteenth-century society, at its best when Suard appeared on the scene. It was the moment at which the reign of Louis XV. met that of Louis XVI.; when the sunset of the old Court shone serenely over the cradle of the sleeping Revolution, and the tragedies both of death and of birth were yet hidden. The power of the Pompadour was fading, and with it went the subordination of weight to epigram and depth to gaiety; whilst the rising race of philosophers in love with freedom, and of scientists in love with facts, was



already deepening the tone of fashionable thought, and leading people to consider matter more than manner.

The society of that day may be roughly divided into three regions : the world of the Court, which still owned but a single aim—to be amused ; choosing its men of letters with that view, conducting every kind of intrigue with the severest etiquette, and hedging itself round with a barrier which only opened to allow the Duchesse de Luxembourg, the Duchesse de Lauzun, and the Princesse de Poix to pass into the domain of letters and conversation.

Below these heights, came the world of the Salons, where grace kept company with thought, and which included the intellectual aristocrats, the cultured middle class, the distinguished foreigners, and the famous Abbés.

Lastly, we enter the more serious domain of the Petits Soupers, those banquets of the Encyclopædists—consisting only of men : of philosophers, Economists, and men of science—such as were given by Helvétius and the Baron d'Holbach. Here it was that many of the new bottles for the new wine were unconsciously fabricated, amidst talk which was usually as grave as it was brilliant.

With the first of these, the Court-world, Suard had little or nothing to do. With the two last he became connected almost at once. The Salons and the Little Suppers belonged, in fact, to each other, for the philosophers who gathered together at the latter had spent the rest of their time in the former, at the feet of the ladies who ruled them. Both these provinces were needful to the kingdom of the Encyclopædists, whose choice of creeds, as well as that of their wives, was determined by their usefulness only ; but whose loves were directed according to laws even more natural than those they investigated for the sake of science. Their heat, however, was but that of ice which burns ; with them passions, often as faithful as they were illegal, were accompanied by strange coldness ; and the most generous dreams of the intellect for humanity by complete inaction. Thought and deed lived divorced from one another ; reality was always discussed and seldom encountered ; Deism by no means excluded servile materialism, whilst the feverish increase of knowledge seemed to cause a corresponding reaction in sentiment. The concentrated life of the head could only find relaxation in a concentrated life of the heart, demanding no justification but its own warmth, consuming the faggots of morality, hiding

their ashes by flame, and leaving little behind it but smoke and an altar; too often that of a woman's soul. Never, perhaps, was there a time when sincerity was so insincere—with the natural result that never since the Middle Ages had body and spirit lived such separate lives; it was, so to speak, the reverse side of asceticism which the philosophers brought about.

Nevertheless, there were compensations. If the men of 1750 clung to the flesh-pots, the cultivated women have rarely been more capable of renouncing them. Women are seldom pioneers—and these ladies often lived luxuriously because it was the custom of their class to do so, and no standard had been set up for them. Madame de Staël (directly after her marriage), when Marie-Antoinette reproached her for an extravagant table, at once reduced her *entrées* from forty to eighteen, and considered herself economical; but she would willingly have lived on potted meat and Swiss milk for the sake of those she loved. Plain living and high thinking were never so well combined by Frenchwomen as at the date we speak of. They took interest in ideas for their own sake; and, either as mistresses or friends, equally understood the conditions of intellectual companionship. Talk has consequently

seldom been better than then; and if there was never so much passion, there has also perhaps never been such absence of coquetry in society.

"Their women," says Horace Walpole of the French, "are the first in the world in everything but beauty; sensible, agreeable, and infinitely informed. The *philosophes*," he adds, with a touch of jealousy, "except Buffon, are solemn, arrogant, dictatorial coxcombs—I need not say superlatively disagreeable." At a moment when science meant success, the scholarly, dilettante Walpole was hardly at his strongest, though he was popular in all the chief drawing-rooms.

At the moment of Suard's arrival, three women ruled Paris through their salons; Madame du Deffand, Madame Geoffrin, and Madame Necker.

Madame du Deffand, aristocratic to the tips of her fingers, a wit to the tip of her tongue, and a pedant to the depths of her brain, was the survivor of the old tradition, with a taste for new ideas, rather than a disciple of them. Once the mistress of the Regent, she possessed all the fascination of intellectual beauty; she kept up its traditions, and even in her latter years always chose her curtains to suit her complexion. "What a need of other

people, and yet what contempt of them!" it was once said of her. She had acute sensibilities, which often appeared like a heart—the one gift not in her possession. The want of it, together with her blindness, heightened her senses and her wish for affection without giving her the means of fulfilling it. These means she tried hard to manufacture. To Voltaire she gave an abstract devotion, and enjoyed sharpening her blade upon that master-sword—the only match for her weapon, even in that world of flashing steel; whilst, when she was seventy, or what she called *soixante-et-mille ans*, she fell in love with Horace Walpole, and, in spite of his frequent retreats, lavished on him the warmest feeling of which she was capable. But her craving for affection appears to us to be not even pathetic, springing as it did from the one idea which regulated her life—a horror of being bored. It was impossible to her to endure one moment of dulness, and she could use all her senses—even her want of them—to prevent this catastrophe. An Economist came to see her one day, and began to talk upon his special topic. "I wonder what the name can be of that tiresome book you are reading?" she exclaimed. "Pray put it down, and do not trouble yourself further."

Yet bored she always was, in spite of her efforts, whether plunged in a hyperbolic friendship with her *bonne-maman*, the young Duchesse de Choiseul, or in the midst of her daily routine. She rose at six in the evening (morning and afternoon never existed for her), and sat up all night: receiving visits first from her friend d'Alembert and from her lover, the Président Hénault, who visited or wrote to her every day for twenty years; then from the rest of the world—always excepting the Economists. Of them she made persistent fun, as part of an age which did not regard her as the first of women; Turgot, to her, was “a fool and a beast,” the others she ignored. But it was not only in good company that she found distraction; sometimes she resorted to minor pleasures. “Her herculean weakness” (writes Horace Walpole), “which could not resist strawberries and cream after supper, has surmounted all the ups and downs which followed her excess.” As a last resource against tedium, she took to herself a companion, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, poor, witty, enchanting, the more so for being plain. The tyrant du Deffand made her read aloud so constantly that it gave her an affection of the lungs for the rest of her life. She knew how to revenge herself, however, and

Madame du Deffand had perhaps counted too much on her plainness. The charming companion, with great presence of mind, rose an hour before her mistress, and contrived between five and six to hold a secret salon of her own, consisting of Madame du Deffand's chief *habitués*, who had by now become Mademoiselle de Lespinasse's warm admirers. D'Alembert fell deeply in love with her. One evening the elder woman came down a few minutes earlier than her wont, and found him making love to the younger. Her fury knew no bounds, and she chased from her house "the serpent she had (somewhat insufficiently) cherished." It was a short-sighted action, for the whole salon rose in indignation, and followed the serpent into the next street. Even the Président Hénault deserted; whilst the Duchesse de Luxembourg, Madame du Deffand's greatest friend, went over to the new favourite, and actually furnished her apartment. Here the triumphant Mademoiselle de Lespinasse set up the most successful salon in Paris. She and d'Alembert remained bound together by a strong mutual attraction, due, so they said, to the touching fact that they were both illegitimate children. After a dangerous illness, during which she nursed him, they set up house together, attracting many fresh recruits.

Amongst others was Suard, whom she gradually came to trust with her most intimate confidences. He early became acquainted with the rivals of Madame du Deffand, Madame Geoffrin and the young Madame Necker, who were united by the closest intimacy.

Madame Geoffrin was, at this date, an elderly woman, with no beauty save her snow-white hair. Born of bourgeois family, she was as destitute of education as she was full of wits. Though for twenty-five years she had been the centre of the Encyclopædists, she never opened their books, or indeed any others, and to the end of her days she spelled according to her fancy. A savant once begged that he might dedicate a grammar to her. "What! dedicate a grammar to *me*!" she cried. "To me, who cannot even spell!" In revenge she read men and women with keen understanding, and deserved a diploma in the study of human inconsistency. It was said of her that "*savoir faire* was her supreme science," a gift specially shown in her choice of a husband. Wisely preferring dulness to the clash of minds, she married the founder of a mirror-manufactory, with no taste except that for the *trompette marine*, which he played incessantly. His literary powers were not great. On finishing, for the third time, the



same volume of the same book, "It is very good," he admitted, "only there seems a little repetition." But Madame Geoffrin appears never to have regretted her union, and even to have remained faithful to him. She could not idealise, and so was seldom disappointed. Stranger still, she did not like others to idealise *her*. She constantly reproached Madame Necker, who had an exalted friendship for her, with "perpetual enthusiasm and incapability of coldness."

"One day" (she writes to her) "you will punish me for your illusions, by refusing to allow me a single good quality. . . . The angels set very little store by me, and I don't care a fig for them. . . . I shan't keep company with them, but what I *do* sincerely wish is that you should love me truly, and see me just as I am."

Like all students who have matriculated in the art of living, she made a creed of compromise. "Hers was a strange character," wrote Marmontel, "difficult to grasp or to paint, because it was in half-tints and delicate shades, though it was very decided. She was kind but not sensitive; benevolent without any of the charms of benevolence; impatient to help the unfortunate, so long as she need not see them—for fear of being moved."

She only possessed two warm qualities—irritation with folly, and zeal for her friends' morals. "An affectionate scold, she toiled at perfecting the characters of her acquaintance," insisting, in softest tones, upon their submission to her counsels, jealous of their confidence, and tyrannising over their constitutions. In return, she gave them all her wisdom and much of her kindness. When Madame Necker was ill, Madame Geoffrin sat with her daily, bringing her own arm-chair in her coach. She nursed Marmontel through a fever with the greatest good-humour, and was full of little attentions for him. Yet when his indiscretion brought him to the Bastille, and again, when his tragedy was suppressed for its political allusions, she refused to receive him into her house. Illness was the affair of the Creator (the only rival she owned); failure was the folly of men. She was just as cautious intellectually, and only entertained the more advanced Encyclopædists in secret, especially Holbach and Diderot, though both of them were her friends and had founded her reputation. The rest, together with all the artists and men of letters, she entertained on Wednesdays and Fridays at dinner, keeping her intimates to supper.

"The good cheer at these latter meals was

*succinct*," writes Marmontel—"generally a chicken, some spinach, and an omelette. The company was not numerous, at most five or six of her particular friends, or a 'quadrille' of men and women from the great world, grouped as it pleased them, and very glad to be with one another. . . . The Venus of these suppers was the alluring and piquant d'Egmont, daughter of the Duke of Richelieu.

Madame Geoffrin, like most bourgeoises, had a weakness for aristocrats, "whom she knew how to tempt into her salon, flattering them without seeming to do so." It was perhaps her powers of attraction that made the envious du Deffand condemn her as absurdly underbred. This was to all intents a libel, so far as her habits were concerned; "she was simple in her tastes, in her clothes, in her furniture, but distinguished in her simplicity"; and, more than this, she knew how to amuse. A great mistress of the art of story-telling, "she had the good sense to speak only of what she knew well, and to allow better informed people to talk about other topics; always polite and attentive, and never even appearing bored with what she did not understand. But she was all the more skilful in presiding over and keeping in hand these two societies, which were

naturally rather free. . . . It must be owned, however, that her company lacked one charm—liberty of thought. With her gentle ‘*Voilà qui est bien*,’ she never left off holding our minds as in a leash; and when she was in the wrong, it was no laughing matter.” In discussions on public affairs, she insisted on facts without comments. And as for her “celestial politics,” Marmontel assures us that “in order to be on good terms with heaven, without being on bad terms with the world, she had invented for herself a sort of clandestine devotion. She went to mass as to worldly advancement, had an apartment in a convent, and a pew in the Capucin Chapel.”

The good old middle-class and its grasp of decorum had perhaps also something to do with this. Though she braved bodily hardships, travelling one winter to Warsaw to visit her adopted son, Stanislas, King of Poland, she would risk no spiritual adventure. It was safer to be orthodox. One day, when she discovered that Marmontel, the *philosophe*, was to stand godfather to a friend’s child, she insisted on hearing him his beads, his Pater, and his answers as sponsor, and would not let him go till he knew them perfectly. He went straight from her to the font, in the full assurance of his competence; but

the Curé's first question, "What is your parish?" which had not been in his catechism, found him without an answer.

Her salon was assiduously attended by the five best-known Abbés: Morellet, the fencer in Economics; Galiani, the mimic and improvisatore, a tiny, plastic Neapolitan, with eager wit and mercurial perceptions; Maury, whose brain was "too vehement and too green," and who was always ready for a fray; Delille, the familiar of boudoirs, who said that he "loved solitude so long as he had somebody to whom to say it"; and Raynal, the journalist, who hated nothing except beggars.

Their presence, however, had nothing to do with the orthodoxy of their hostess. The Abbés played a great and unique part in the society of that time—partaking of confidential doctor, confidential lawyer, and accommodating director. They were, so to speak, the tactful ambassadors from heaven to Paris, and, like most diplomatists, became naturalised in that metropolis.

It was the Abbé Raynal who, making Suard's acquaintance soon after his arrival, first got him work on the *Mercure*. He had begun by a bank-clerkship, which he had instantaneously thrown up because he thought it a sinecure; then

he had been tutor to the sons of the Duke of Nassau, a task by no means congenial to him. He was only too glad to welcome a literary protector in the Abbé, and to be introduced by him to Madame Geoffrin, who thenceforward became his patron. As he was never guilty of exaggeration or folly, their intercourse remained almost unruffled, excepting for her lectures on his haughtiness when he rebuffed the advances of a powerful but insolent person to whom she had presented him. "When one hasn't a shirt to one's back, one must have no pride," she said to him. "On the contrary," he replied, "it is just then that one must have it, because one has got nothing else." Happily her introductions did not stop here.

It was at her house that, almost directly, he met Fontenelle, then old and rather deaf. The young man's heart thrilled, and the past became alive to him when the philosopher began the conversation with: "I remember one day hearing Madame Lafayette say at Madame de Sévigné's"—which sent Suard back happy to his solitary apartment. Good luck pursued him. He wrote an article upon Montesquieu which pleased the latter, who expressed a wish to meet the author, and had a long and flattering conversation with

him. He came into contact with all the best people at Madame Geoffrin's, and again at the Hôtel of Madame Necker, with whom he speedily became acquainted.

It was greatly to Madame Geoffrin's credit that, far from being jealous, she had a warm affection for Madame Necker, who annexed in three years the guests whom it had taken the older woman a quarter of a century to collect.

Yet it was rather by intellectual sway than by charm that Madame Necker achieved this victory. The Swiss minister's daughter, now wooed by Gibbon, now sending her father's grey nag for the curate-lovers with whom she held theological flirtations; the president and inventor of the youthful Symposium by the Lausanne Fountain; the brave bread-winner and governess in aristocratic families; the penniless companion whom the stately Necker courted in the place of her mistress—must have had Minerva's helmet as well as her brains. It was not that she despised lighter pleasures; Marmontel rather spitefully describes first meeting her at a ball—"pretty enough, but dancing badly," and rushing up to him to introduce herself, and beg him to come and dine with her, because she had heard so much of him.

But her nature was serious. Geneva will out, and the cassock showed beneath the hoop. This contrast gave distinction both to her character and her salon ; it helped her to hide a fiery heart behind a measured, even rigid exterior ; at the same time it concentrated her mind on the religious questions then under discussion, and made her the Egeria of the Encyclopædists ; a Calvinist Egeria, if not by creed, at least by temperament. Through her own firm belief in God and the soul, accentuated by frequent bodily suffering which deepened her natural tendencies, she had the power of tempering the extremes of the men of science ; whilst her large mind admitted all their ideas, and easily took the intellectual point of view. Her Genevan friends reproached her about her freethinking society. " I *have* atheists for friends," she replied. " Why not ? They are unhappy friends." Her salon at the Hôtel Leblanc in the Rue Cléry thus bore quite a different stamp to Madame Geoffrin's, though they saw precisely the same people. Here, together with the Abbés already mentioned, came that backbiter in ruffles, Marmontel, the courtly old gossip, half sentimental, half malicious ; the " Little Tempest Naigeon," the naturalist, spluttering, exclaiming, and prefacing all his con-



versation with "Chimeras, errors, prejudices!" Thomas, Madame Necker's knight, who never stirred from her side, and who presents a singular combination of subtlety and triteness; Marivaux, the master of fine shades in novels and plays; Saint Lambert, the admirer and translator of Bolingbroke, not gay himself, but easily animated by others, and considered the model of a politeness "which came from the heart and went to the heart"; d'Alembert, gay and serene, "a mixture of strength and weakness, whose strength came from virtue, whilst his weakness came from kindness"; with him, his Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, full of "the fire which circulated through her veins and her nerves," the only woman whom Madame Geoffrin admitted to her intimate suppers.

As an antidote to her warmth, we have Grimm, mincing, cold, and effusive, glittering with meteoric accuracy, one-sided sarcasm, and stilted perorations; now laughing at "Hypatia Necker" for being "*dévoté* in her own way, wishing to be a sincere Huguenot, Socinian, or Deist, though in her determination to be something, she ends by having no reason for anything"; now making the poor lady burst into tears at table, during a religious argument of an advanced nature, in

which he refuses to be conquered by her ; then writing a letter of apology, in which his chief concern is the possible effect of her tears upon her digestion ; at one moment scolding her for living at ten minutes' distance from him, at another describing his intellectual frivolities with Catherine of Russia, and his life at the Court of Frederick the Great, where he loved to appear dressed as a shepherd with a crook and green ribbons. More sympathetic is the figure of Diderot, the jack-of-all-trades in literature, "better known by intercourse than by his writings" ; straight from Bohemia and Mademoiselle Volland ; a comet without a heaven, as perverse as he was luminous ; a creature of intuitions, who was fertile and fruitless, deep and shallow, coarse and delicate, striking and commonplace, all in the same breath. "He would rather," it was written, "invent the minuet all over again than dance it like other people." But, gipsy as he was, he too found a sanctuary with Madame Necker. "How many things you will see here"—so he says when he sends her one of his books—"which would never have been either thought or written, if I had had the honour of knowing you sooner. I dare believe" (but here we detect him laughing in his gold-laced sleeve) "that the purity of your

soul would have passed into mine, and that I also should have become a kind of angel." Sometimes, as we have seen, came the fast-aging Fontenelle, who had never been known either to laugh or to cry, so that even Madame Geoffrin reproached him with his indifference: Fontenelle with his genius for suspending judgment, whom the same lady asked what he should do if she confessed herself guilty of a murder. "I should wait, Madame," he replied.

And in the wake of all these appeared the ambitious Helvétius, absorbed in the search for a new Idea, and illuminated by his gift of eternal youth; Holbach, the Patron, "calm, polite, never familiar," and the owner of a prodigious memory; the high-souled Minister Turgot, eager for reform; Creutz, the lover of the fine arts, "impasioned for the beautiful in ethics—full of information—never carried away, but often enchanted"; the handsome Milord Stormont, ambassador for England, called "The Beautiful Englishman" by the Parisians who saw him and "The Good Englishman" by those who lived with him; the Baron Gleichen, Danish ambassador, who never opened his lips without salting the conversation, or allowed an irrational interjection to pass unpunished. "That piece was very beautiful and

very difficult!" a musical enthusiast said to him, after an indifferent performance. "I only wish it had been *impossible*," the Baron warmly replied. He was no more merciful to a gushing lady who beheld the foolish King Christian of Denmark during his stay in Paris. "What a head he has on his shoulders!" she exclaimed to Gleichen. "A *crowned* head, Madame," he answered, with a deep bow.

Last and, in his own house, least, the stately, periwigged Necker strayed in and out of the company, with distraught countenance, and brain far away in fiscal Utopias.

Madame Geoffrin, as we know, entertained on Mondays and Wednesdays, whilst Holbach had Thursdays. Madame Necker was therefore compelled to adopt Friday for her general day, and Tuesday for her intimates.

On Fridays she provided *dîner maigre*, which (according to the naughty Madame du Deffand) was usually badly cooked. Dinner that lady declared to be "the fourth end of man," though she could not remember the other three; whilst the aristocratic Marquise de Créquy considered Madame Necker's dinner-hour of four in the afternoon so ill-bred and so impossible, that she left the house vowing never to set foot in it again.

The ladies of Hypatia's salon were indeed few and far between, and it was only on Fridays that they were admitted at all, together with men of letters and artists of all sorts, Clairon, the tragic actress, so much admired by Garrick, being prominent amongst them. Her aristocratic acquaintance came then also, especially the saintly Amélie de Lauzun, pensive and sweet, the snowdrop of that careless world; and the downright Madame de Ferté Imbault, Madame Geoffrin's daughter, and, like many daughters of gifted women, a reaction against her mother, though endowed with some of her talents. Tired of intellect, she instituted at her house an "Order of Lampooning Knights and Fooling Ladies," who were bound to utter nothing but "witty stupidities." At the same time, she constituted herself Madame Necker's Mentor, warning her severely against the friendships with Madame du Deffand and others who were unconventional in their morals.

Conversation was often varied by the performance on the clavecin of the newest music; occasionally, also, there were moving recitations by Clairon, supported by Marmontel and La Harpe; or readings by some rising poet or novelist. It was here that Bernardin de St. Pierre,

the somewhat servile seeker after fame, read *Paul et Virginie* for the first time. It is almost a relief to find that even those brilliant salons had their failures, and that "the impression of weariness left by this performance has remained an almost classical memory."

They did not always meet in Paris. In the summer, the whole party drove out to St. Ouen, the Neckers' country-seat, at a short distance from Paris; or they had a sparkling *pique-nique* at St. Cloud, returning late to town by the Bois-de-Boulogne.

But the conversation which has come down to us is that of the Hôtel in the Rue Cléry, and it was here that Suard figured as a talker. His wife described him in after years as a thinker and a dreamer, rather silent in society; it is amusing to discover that amongst his friends he was famous for his powers of contradiction. Early in his Parisian life, we find him at the Neckers', amongst a group described as consisting of "the absent-minded Necker, the argumentative Morellet, the emphatic Thomas, the light-hearted Marmontel, and the gallant poet Bernard," another frequenter of the Hôtel Leblanc, whom Voltaire nicknamed "Bernard the Nice."

M. BERNARD begins the conversation: You

look wonderfully well, Madame ; your complexion is fresher than these flowers.

MADAME NECKER : Poets are gallant.

M. BERNARD : Say susceptible.

MADAME NECKER : One *can* unite these two qualities ; but I fear much they are perishing. Really the Abbé is plunging me into despair ; this mortal hour has he been growling against women, and these gentlemen only excite and applaud him.

L'ABBÉ MORELLET : Yes, Madame, I maintain that women haven't the ghost of good sense, and I should have convinced you, if you had deigned to listen to me ; but it is impossible to argue with you, and you prove our thesis wonderfully. What say you, M. Necker ?

M. NECKER (absent-mindedly) : Many thanks, Monsieur, I don't take any.

MADAME NECKER : Madame Riccoboni, for instance, excels in her own line.

M. SUARD : But, first of all, *has* she a line of her own ?

MADAME NECKER : Surely she must have one, to write with such grace and such ardour, and to interest her readers as she does.

M. SUARD : Write ! I don't understand what

you mean by writing : she arranges sentences well enough, without any imagination and without any ideas.

MADAME NECKER : Oh, sir, you exaggerate !

M. SUARD : I don't understand what you mean by exaggeration. Exaggeration is a word that has no sense. Nobody exaggerates. One expresses one's thought, and there's the end of it.

MADAME NECKER : I never can agree with M. Suard, even upon the weather ; for if I say that it is raining, he cannot understand what I mean by rain.

M. SUARD : Ah, charming lady, you are making fun of me ! But, *à propos*, M. Thomas is keeping neutral ; that's not fair.

M. THOMAS : I confess, sir, that women are often wanting in the divine fire which animates us, in the noble enthusiasm which prolongs our midnight watches and immortalises them. But if they do not soar with us into heaven, they beautify the earth. A good woman is the most beautiful sight to a sensitive soul.

M. MARMONTEL : Good ! All very well, my dear Thomas ; but kindly carry off the good ones with you to heaven, and leave the others to stroll with us on the earth.



M. BERNARD : Fie, sir! You talk blasphemy, and forget you are in the sanctuary.

The greatest personality amongst the *philosophes* was, however, never seen either at the Hôtel Leblanc, or in any other society. Buffon, "the great colourist" of thought, the profoundest and most sympathetic figure in the new scientific world (the more so that he lived apart from it), had long since withdrawn to his house near the Zoological Gardens, of which he was Intendant. Here he spent his days watching the animals and developing his theories, many of which, especially his rudimentary conception of evolution, forestalled those of Darwin. For fourteen years he carried on with Madame Necker a friendship touched with pathos—the romance of an old man for a young woman. It is affecting to read of his humility about his own mind, as compared to hers, or to hear him tell her that happiness consists in losing nothing that one has enjoyed. From the first moment of their intercourse they began to discuss ultimate topics, and it is not surprising that he should have chosen her ear for the exposition of his faith. For a living faith, though of a vague description, he did possess; a faith belonging to a deeper nature than that of

his contemporaries, though it differed little from theirs in substance. To the outward forms of worship he always clung, and though he is said to have called God and Nature synonymous, he put such a warm personality into Nature ("the worker for ever active who knows how to use everything—whose means are time, space, and matter, whose object is the universe, whose aim is movement and life") that his scepticism is almost religious. His purpose was to unite science and belief, and one of his first presents to Madame Necker was a pamphlet he had written, attempting to reconcile the account of the Creation in Genesis with his own theory of the formation of the globe. Soul he believed in, after an intellectual fashion, at any rate so far as his *amie* was concerned.

"The weaker your body grows, the more strength you seem to have in your thoughts," he writes to her. "The two substances are very distinct in you, whilst in me they fuse into one. I feel the faculties of my mind decrease with those of my body, and that is the basis of the difference in our opinions."

It was probably through Madame Necker that Suard learned to know Buffon, who was afterwards to play an important, if transitory rôle in his

affairs. With the rest of the salon he soon became intimately acquainted, the most eminent of them honouring him with special marks of confidence. Grimm made him one of the editors of his *Correspondance*; Marmontel, when condemned to the Bastille, begged him to carry on his newspaper in his place; and Morellet looked on him as one of his most trusted friends. To Diderot he was a literary conscience, trying to spur him (through newspaper criticisms) to the use of his best powers, and convinced that if he concentrated these on worthy objects, instead of frittering them, he might attain any rank he chose. His aim of educating the people through tragedy met with Suard's warm approval—an approval of greater moral than æsthetic value, since Diderot's immortality could hardly rest upon his tragedy or his ethics! “It would need a Goethe to talk to him”—such in after years was Suard's conclusion about the philosopher who “wrote by intuition before he had thought . . . spreading his light into all minds and his heat into all souls.”

Holbach, “the first *maître d'hôtel* of philosophy,” was, as we know, already a friend of Suard's. Through him the younger man was speedily admitted to the Thursday suppers of the Encyclopædists and their friends, amongst whom

David Hume was prominent. Here, as we have seen, every creed—or the absence of it—was fully discussed, and “things were said that would have brought thunderbolts down on the house a hundred times, if thunderbolts fell for such matters.” Every fine shade of agnosticism was represented by the guests, but few amongst them attained more than “a faint possible theism.” The majority, led by Grimm, got no farther than a code of polite manners towards other religions, which they called tolerance, and set up as a belief competent for human needs. Yet Marmontel declares that “God, virtue, and the holy laws of natural morality” were never so much as doubted at their table, and they greatly resented the charge of atheism which was brought against them. There was no real contradiction in all this; so infatuated were they about the lay-figure they had tricked out in sublime clothes, that they almost became, so to speak, the Don Quixotes of scepticism, and took the wooden doll for a living presence.

At any rate, their faith in politeness bore one good result. During all their discussions, they never quarrelled. Collé and Crébillon, the “joyous madcaps” who served them as jesters, kept up an unceasing fire of *bel-esprit* which never degenerated into personalities.

He found Suard readier than Hume to take his counsels, and constituted himself the young man's patron, offering him generous help in money, which Suard, however, refused. He stood in no actual need of it, for he was making enough for his modest needs. Early in his career he met the Abbé Arnaud, an eager lover of music and the arts. They united not only their purses and households, taking up their abode together, but also their literary aims. Together they started a newspaper which made a special object of acquainting the French with the English authors, for whom Suard felt the strongest affinity. It was in this periodical and in their translation that Young's *Night Thoughts* first appeared in France, where it was to enjoy such an astonishing vogue. The success and reputation of the editors increased.

But Suard did not rest content with the pursuit of fame alone. Like all his companions, he was ready to embark on a connection with a literary lady. He fell in love with Madame Krüdner, a woman of fascinating beauty and mystic tendencies, famous for "the lightness of her ethereal grace" and her genius for dancing. Her "shawl dance," described by Madame de Staël in *Delphine*, was a poem in motion, her blue

scarf and her golden hair twining in and out of each other in magic curves. To the marriage-tie she naturally paid no attention, having, luckily for herself, made an unhappy union at sixteen, with an affectionate ambassador, who could not see his way to live with her. She found others to take his place, but, anxious for success in society as well as in love, she set her heart upon having a salon in Paris. Emulating Madame de Staël, not only did she lose her sleep from jealousy of her social victories, but also wrote a novel, *Valérie*, which had a striking success.

As the charms of first youth waned, the New Jerusalem began to appear an attractive residence to her. Having fallen under the influence of Jung Stilling, the Swedenborgian, who developed the exalted side of her nature, she now received her guests in the flowing robes of a priestess. Her exaltation was quite as sincere as her frivolity. She became subject to trances and raptures, and in 1806 was converted by a shoemaker to a kind of Moravianism. After this, she gave herself up to proselytising and open-air preaching all over Germany and Switzerland, often pursued by the police, and always spurred by great devotion and great egoism. Essentially

the *galante* of religion, she carried on spiritual flirtations at the same time as she wrestled in earnest prayer, spent herself in spreading her faith, and lavished large sums upon the poor, collected from her converts. So much money did she obtain, that the fathers and husbands of Bâle forbade their wives and daughters to give any more to a lady so vague and so potent.

At last she returned to Paris, where she resumed her salon. It acquired a special character as the centre of the fashionable *Illuminés*, who frequented it in evening dress. Prayers were held before conversation began. Madame Krüdner once had, it is said, to beg Madame Récamier not to come to these *soirées*, as her beauty proved too disturbing to the devotions of her guests, who, still on their knees, immediately turned round to stare at her. It was about this time that Madame Krüdner began to prophesy—Napoleon figuring as the Black and the Czar Alexander as the White Angel of her visions. It was the crowning stroke of her faith that the latter, perhaps aided by her flattering sayings, became her most submissive convert. It was not difficult for her to obtain complete ascendancy over a nature as impressionable as it was ambitious, and as pleasure-loving as it was super-

stitious. She put her saintly finger into very mundane pies ; and it was in her rooms that the Holy Alliance between him and Prussia was signed, his draft still bearing some words in her handwriting. Towards the end of her life, she went to St. Petersburg, followed by three thousand poor, but discovered that the Czar had grown cold, and would prefer her departure. Driven by the Spirit, she determined to build for herself a penitentiary (to be called "La Porte du Ciel") on a peak in the Caucasus ; this she found impracticable, but, with undaunted courage and resources, resolved upon a mission to Crim-Tartary. Escorted by a train of devotees which was sprinkled with aristocrats, she proceeded thither, mounted upon an ass, in the costume of the Virgin Mary ; whilst her daughter and son-in-law followed her, dressed as Mary Magdalen and St. George. When they arrived, she preached to the Crim-Tartars in French—a language of which they did not understand a word, though this was a fact which did not abate her fervour. Her body, however, overcame even *her* activity ; her sufferings compelled her to give up work, and she died of cancer in 1824.

"Le ciel c'est moi" (to change the words of the Great Monarch) was her attitude towards herself



—an assumption bound to lead a frail mortal into dangerous quibbles. She sincerely believed in herself, but she had miraculous powers of self-deception, and dazzled herself by her own crude generosity and convincing fervour. Her ascendancy over Suard was not of long duration. In about 1766 he met Amélie Panckoucke, the sister and ward of a friend of his, a printer. She was ten years younger than himself, as beautiful as most young ladies of that age, and as impressionable and innocent as it is possible to be. They fell in love—such true love that it could not have run smooth. Poverty was not the only objection. Panckoucke, the brother, though himself a freethinker, was bound by his own interests to support Fréron, the leader of the Anti-Encyclopædists. He refused to have anything to say to a guest of Helvétius and Holbach. For a long time he was obdurate. But Amélie was growing thin and ill, and he was a devoted brother. More than this, Holbach used influence, and Buffon interceded in person. It was his representations that at length moved Panckoucke to consent and determined Suard's fate. The betrothal was allowed, the lovers were in rapture, and Panckoucke not only gave his blessing, but, what was still more important, an excellent

trousseau of well-fitting dresses, much dwelt on by the bride.

There was now but one more person's consent to gain, more important even than the brother's. Madame Krüdner was a tyrant whose golden chains were not as heavy as they were tight. Suard could not face her, but the amiable Neckers undertook the task of breaking the news and gaining her permission. They performed the latter feat by a cunning appeal to her vanity, persuading her that this sacrifice would be the only consolation which befitted her for the loss of the man she loved.

As the lovers despised any consideration of poverty, all obstacles were now removed. In 1767 they were married, and lived happily for some time afterwards.

## CHAPTER II

THE Suards did not actually begin with love in a cottage, but they started in very small apartments, on the modest income of £125 a year, with rent and firing free, and no other help excepting the contribution of the Abbé Arnaud, who continued to live under their roof.

But there was one household-goddess whom he had omitted to conciliate before marriage, and who now visited her wrath upon him. This was Madame Geoffrin, whom he had never consulted about this important step, and who looked upon an imprudent marriage as a capital offence. She refused to see him for two years, after which time Madame Necker arranged that she should meet the young wife at her house. Little Amélie trembled, but was encouraged by Madame Geoffrin's "look of reason mixed with kindness." The formidable lady was conquered in spite of

herself, embraced Amélie, and told her husband that even without a dowry she was worth more than the most peaceful celibacy or the richest match. This was a great admission from one whose motto for matrimony (a motto which she had enforced upon Suard) was Bacon's: "A wife and children are hostages to fortune." The day after the interview she sent a handsome dress to Madame Suard, and ever afterwards remained the constant friend and patroness of the "Little Household," as the Suard's establishment was soon named.

The Neckers also received the young couple with cordiality, and Madame Suard was the only lady allowed on their intimate Tuesday evenings; a privilege granted her, we hear, on account of her gratitude and humility.

Their social life in the best circles of Paris, compelled careful husbandry of their slight resources. They had help, however. Their grand friends lent them carriages and horses, and sent them presents of game; and the little lady contrived to combine economy with fashion by never making her full toilette till eight or nine o'clock, on the nights that she went out. Presently they started their own "evenings" twice a week. They gave their guests supper

only, whilst their salon was distinguished from others by its artistic prestige.

But Amélie's life was not altogether social. Tronchet, the ladies' doctor then in vogue (the successor of Madame de Pompadour's Quesnay), was strict in enjoining daily exercise upon her as a means of keeping off "the vapours." Every morning she used to walk in the gardens of the Tuileries or Luxembourg, with Pope, Richardson, or Robertson as a study. She shared her husband's enthusiasm for English literature, and they, together with the Abbé Arnaud, took in English papers, and not only knew more about English affairs than the Cabinet Ministers, but made themselves publicly useful by their knowledge. Suard and Raynal started a French history of universal travel, to appear simultaneously with an English volume of the same kind.

It was his anxiety to return the visits of Hume and Walpole which, shortly after this, drew Suard to England. The day he arrived in London, there was a riot in favour of Wilkes, who had just been expelled from the House of Commons. The mob forced Suard to dismount and shout, "Vive John Wilkes! Vive la Liberté!" with the rest, a welcome which slightly alarmed the serene Frenchman, still ignorant of liberty and revolution.

But next day the ferment had subsided, and the town was calm ; he paid his visits to celebrities, and obtained Robertson's permission to translate his *Charles V.* The proofs were sent him as they were printed, and his translation was not only admired by Robertson, but also by Gibbon, Hume, and Walpole.

It was Suard's love of reasoned freedom which found such satisfaction in England. The same quality attracted Condorcet to him — Condorcet, the high-minded, gentle geometrician of abnormal energies ; the schemer for the world, born to be Prime Minister of Utopia ; the sanguine orator-philosopher, with no feeling smaller than his love for humanity. He cared for few people, and Turgot, d'Alembert, the Suards, and the Duchesse d'Enville were his only friends. Somewhat later he came to live with the Suards, and greatly influenced Amélie's mind by his ideas. He had a high opinion of her ; "I would give the half of my geometry," he exclaimed, "for the gift Madame Suard possesses without knowing it. She grows eloquent directly she is moved—directly anybody wounds either her heart or her taste."

Many friends were added to their circle. It was now that Suard became intimate with François de Pange, supposed to be like him in appearance

and manner. A constitutional critic of government, he may fitly be termed the precursor of Alexis de Tocqueville. We shall meet him again later as the cousin of Pauline de Montmorin, whom he brought some years afterwards to the Suard's salon, where she became prominent. "Monsieur Suard and I" (writes Amélie) "saw Madame de Beaumont at Madame de Staël's. She told us she would like to accompany our cousin to our *soirées*; she enjoyed them greatly, and we thought her as witty as she was amiable."

The friendship seems to have progressed, for it is at the Suard's that the Minister Montmorin finds his daughter one day when he comes to Paris to seek her; whilst de Pange sought Suard's companionship more and more, and became a daily guest on their hearth as well as in their salon.

Another figure there was Chamfort, the coruscating pessimist and cynical maxim-writer, who ended by committing suicide after the Revolution. He alone, of all Suard's friends, was detested by his idealistic hostess for his sharp eye and sharper tongue, both busy with the vices of others.

It is a relief to turn from him to Madame Tessé, an actively virtuous lady, of considerable wits. After the smallpox, when her friends were con-

doling with her on her altered appearance, she exclaimed with spirit, "Has my mind also had the smallpox?" and changed the conversation. She possessed influence at Court, and procured for Suard and l'Abbé Arnaud the editorship of the *Gazette de France* and a solid salary.

Then there were their country friends whom they visited in the summer: Watelet, the versatile Farmer-general, *Académicien*, and gardener, and Madame Lecomte, who had left her husband to live with him at Moulin-Joli; Saint Lambert ("an indefatigable host to those he liked") and Madame d'Houdetot, whose life together at Sanois, in the valley of Montmorency, constituted an idyll almost as innocent as it was improper. They kept to each other faithfully for forty years, Madame Lecomte and Watelet for almost as long.

"It was the eighteenth century," Chateaubriand writes of them, . . . "married in its own way. You have only to persist in life, and illegalities become legal. People begin to feel an infinite respect for immorality, because it has gone on and time has adorned it with wrinkles."

There could have been little difficulty in remaining constant to Madame d'Houdetot, who had been the friend of Rousseau and the original of his "Julie." The queen of grace and gay sensi-



bility, she possessed the poet's temperament, and was still able in her old age to use it in praise of love.

"Et l'amour me console ;  
Rien ne pourra me consoler de lui,"

she sang at eighty ; whilst twenty years later—" I am French ! " she exclaimed. " I am a hundred years old, and I cannot reproach myself with ever having made the smallest pleasure seem absurd." She was misquoting Fontenelle, who spoke these words at the close of his life, but used the word *virtue* where she substituted *pleasure*, and would have probably been delighted with their new application. Her conversation, which " had more sallies than it had continuity," was so charming as to make her hearers forget the defects of her personal appearance. " She squinted horribly, and her features were strongly marked and unpleasing. . . . Good heavens ! how well a pretty face would suit that mind ! " writes Madame Suard. She goes on to describe how Madame d'Houdetot never changed an opinion or a taste which she had once formed, either as to its substance or its expression. It was perhaps this fixity which regulated the affections of an otherwise volatile nature, and made her as faithful a friend as she was a lover. She never lost her

power of enchanting all who approached her, from Jean Jacques Rousseau in the early days of her career, to Madame Rémusat in later days, when Napoleon's Court had routed the old traditions. At the close of her life she still kept every tender habit of old days, and never retired to bed without tapping her slipper three times on the floor as a good-night greeting to Saint Lambert.

In order to have her as a neighbour, and encouraged by his improved circumstances, Suard sold his library and bought a small country-house, Fontenai-sur-Roses, for his wife. It was near Sanois and within easy reach of Paris. To this cosy hermitage she retired during the warm weather, whilst he remained in Paris, "to give his friends dinner off soup and fruit," and visited his Amélie once if not twice every day. He remained with her all Sunday, when they kept open house for their country neighbours and occasional visitors from town. Talleyrand, still on the verge of fame, was amongst the number; Lafayette also, full of latent power and loyalty.

In Paris, too, the Suards seem to have moved to better quarters. They had a house in the Rue Royale which owned at any rate one distinction, that of being next door to the hôtel of Madame

de Coislin. This lady, the cousin of Madame de Châteauroux, was an epitome of the old traditions. What heart she possessed still clung to the Court of Louis XV., whose mistress she is said to have been, though she never confessed as much. She admitted that she had been passionately loved, but said she had treated her royal lover with extreme severity. "I have seen him at my feet," she used to say. "He had charming eyes, and his language was seductive. One day he offered to give me a costume made of china, like Madame de Pompadour's." This strange token of love, which was actually presented to her, afterwards fell into the hands of George IV., who bestowed it upon Lady Cunningham. Madame de Coislin indulged in no luxury that was not given her. A fastidious miser, parsimony formed a convenient article of her aristocratic creed. In her time, she said, it was not considered good manners for a lady to pay her doctor's bill; and as for fine linen, she condemned it as the badge of a *parvenue*. "We ladies of the Court," she exclaimed in her old age, "never had more than two chemises; they were renewed when they were worn out; we always wore silk, and did not look like grisettes, as young ladies do now-

a-days." As might be expected, she did not approve of guests; on rare occasions she invited somebody to dinner, but inveighed the whole time against coffee, declaring that nobody liked it, and that it only prolonged the repast. Away from home, she was no more generous. When she travelled, her nephew used to precede her and order an excellent meal at the inn, but on her arrival she countermanded it, and dined off half a pound of cherries. Great was her fury when she found that it was impossible to mitigate the hotel bill, which never failed to include the price of her uneaten dinner.

At once believing and unbelieving, her morals were governed by an *Illuminisme* of her own. Faith, as a quality, she rather despised. Madame Krüdner once said to her, "Do you ever feel a mysterious confessor within yourself?" "Madame," replied Madame de Coislin, "I never felt any mysterious confessor within myself. I only know my own confessor within his own confessional;" after which repartee the two ladies never met again. She certainly kept a sharper eye upon the fashions than upon her creed, and invented the *chignon flottant*, a *coiffure* opposed by Marie Leczinska as a dangerous innovation. Chateaubriand knew her

at the end of her life, and has left us a picture of her :

"Madame de Coislin was a woman of the finest manners," he writes ; "though she was close upon eighty, her proud, dominating eyes expressed mind and irony. She was quite illiterate, and used to boast of the fact. She had passed through the Voltairean age without suspecting it ; if she had any notion of it at all, it was as a time of bourgeois aridness. It was not that she ever spoke of her birth ; she was too well-bred to fall into such an absurdity ; she knew very well how to meet insignificant people without coming down from her pedestal ; but then she was the daughter of the first Marquis of France."

She received Chateaubriand in her bedroom, which was adorned by two sea-pieces of Vernet's, given her by Louis le Bien-Aimé. She never rose till two from her big bed, with its green damask curtains, where she lay propped up by pillows, long diamond earrings hanging from her ears, and falling upon her "silk night-gown sown with tobacco," such as was worn in the days of the Fronde ; around her were scattered envelopes already written upon by her friends, on which, to save note-paper, she con-

ducted her correspondence. Her only companion was a snarling lap-dog, who occasionally put his head from the sheets and barked angrily. It was the finishing touch to her history that when she died, her sister and brother-in law were found at the table in the room where her body was still lying, counting out her money, which they had found hidden in a hollow panel.

Such a lady was bound to be an unpleasant neighbour to the humble Suard. Carlyle was not the first person to find out that the possession of poultry makes bad neighbours. Madame Suard had a cock which annoyed Madame de Coislin. "Cut your cock's neck, Madame," she wrote to Madame Suard. "Madame," replied the latter, "I have the honour to tell you that I shall not cut my cock's neck." "Oh, my dear, what times we live in!" cried the outraged Madame de Coislin to a friend. "It is actually the daughter of Panckoucke who has done this, the wife of that member of the *Académie*, don't you know?"

This description of Suard referred to the fact that, in 1772, he was received into the *Académie*, at the same time as Delille. The King had at first refused to consider either of their claims, because he thought they were Encyclopædists, but on better information, he revoked this decision,

and Suard made his first Oration : a Vindication of Philosophical Methods. He introduced a portrait of Voltaire, who was not slow to acknowledge it in the most flattering manner.

"The day of your reception," he wrote, "is a great epoch. There is so short an interval between the condemnation of Fénelon by decree and your oration, that I am still quite stupefied by your courage. True, it is accompanied by great wisdom. You are covered by the shield of Minerva, even whilst you strike out to right and left with the sword of Mars. . . . Farewell, sir. We will have no Gothic formula of 'your very,' etc. etc. I am too much your debtor," etc. etc.

The Suard's relations with Voltaire by no means stopped here. Ever since early girlhood, the fervent Amélie had worshipped him from afar. Three years after the arrival of this letter, she was seized by a longing to take her courage into both hands and visit him at Ferney. Her husband gave his consent, though work prevented him from accompanying her, and in June 1775 she set out on her voyage, escorted by her devoted brother.

She found the great man alone with his house-mates—his niece, Madame Denis, and a

young girl, "always laughing at everything," whom he called "Fifteen-years-old." He lavished kindness upon them, keeping up the most demonstrative habits with them, as indeed he did with most women. Into this household entered our hero-worshipping little lady, incense in hand. She lost no time in reporting her impressions to her husband, and continued to do so daily, in the following letters. We have thought better to give them in sequence and without comment, that they may convey a vivid picture of her experiences—even though our eyes may be occasionally irritated by the fumes of incense which she casts about him. We must, however, remember that diffuse adulation was the fashion of that day; not only Evelina and her lover, but Clarissa and Harriet Byron would have wept tears of mortification over a letter that possessed no hyperbolic invocations. The language in which a moth admires a star, framed upon this scale, must never excite surprise.

"FERNEY, *June 1775.*

"I have at last reached the goal of my desires and of my journey: I have seen M. de Voltaire! The transports of St. Theresa could never have surpassed those which the sight of



the great man made me feel. It seemed to me that I was in the presence of a god; but of a god whom I had long loved and adored, to whom it was at last granted me to show all my gratitude and love. If his genius had not already produced this illusion in me, his face alone would have done so. It is impossible to describe the fire of his eyes and all the other graces of his countenance—and what an enchanting smile! There is not one wrinkle which is not an adornment. Ah, how amazed I was, when, instead of the decrepit face I expected, there appeared this physiognomy full of fire and expression; when, instead of a stooping old man, I beheld a straight, upright figure of noble but easy manners. And what tone! What politeness! A politeness which, like his genius, belongs to him alone. My heart beat violently when I entered the courtyard of his château. Having at last attained the long-wished-for moment, I should have liked to put off a happiness which I always included in my most fervent prayers, and I was almost relieved when Madame Denis told us he had gone for a walk. He soon appeared, exclaiming, 'Where is this lady? Where is she? Hers is the soul I come to seek!' Then, as I advanced—'They write to me, Madame, that you are all soul.'

'That soul, sir,' I replied, 'is brimful of you, and has long sighed for the joy of approaching yours.' . . . At this moment there were a dozen persons in the drawing-room: M. Poissonier had just arrived; he had not yet seen M. de Voltaire; but at once sat down by him, and set to work to talk about himself. M. de Voltaire told him that he (M. Poissonier) had done a great service to humanity by finding a way to take away the salt from seawater. 'Oh, sir,' he replied, 'I have conferred a much greater benefit upon it since then! I was made for discoveries, and I have now found the means of preserving meat for years without salting it!' It seemed as if he had come to Ferney to make himself admired, and not to do homage to M. de Voltaire. How small I thought him! What a miserable thing is vain mediocrity by the side of modest and indulgent genius! For M. de Voltaire seemed to listen to him with indulgence. As for me, I was exasperated! I strained my ears so as to lose no word which fell from the lips of the great man, who said a thousand amiable and witty things with that easy grace which lends such charm to all his writings, though its rapid flash strikes one even more in conversation. Without any eagerness to speak

himself, he listens to everybody with an attention more flattering, perhaps, than any he has gained for his own talk.

“His niece said a few words; his eyes full of indulgence were fixed upon her, and he smiled most amiably. As soon as M. Poissonier had spoken enough of himself, he was quite willing to give up his place. Urged by a lively desire, by a sort of passion which surmounted my shyness, I went to take possession of it. I had been rather encouraged by something M. de Voltaire had said of me. I had never before experienced such sensations. Here was a feeling fed for fifteen years, which, for the first time, I could declare to him who was its object. I expressed it with all the disorder which so great a happiness inspires. He seemed to enjoy it. From time to time he stemmed the torrent by kind words. ‘You are spoiling me!’ ‘You want to turn my head!’ And when he could talk to me about all his friends, it was with the greatest interest that he did so. He talked much of you and his gratitude for your kindness. He spoke much too of M. de Turgot. ‘He has,’ he said, ‘three terrible things against him—the financiers, the scamps, and the gout.’ I said they were counterbalanced by his virtues, his courage,

and the esteem of the King. 'But, Madame, I hear you are one of his enemies.'

"'I, sir? what an injustice! that would make me an enemy of the public weal. Cannot I reconcile my respect for M. Turgot with that which I owe to M. Necker?'

"'Madame, if you understand his book, that does you great credit. As for me, I should be very glad to have it translated for me. It is,' he added gaily, 'a conundrum of four hundred pages. M. Necker came and asked the public riddles, like the Queen of Sheba who puzzled Solomon, in old days.'

"I was embarrassed by this mocking tone about one whom I have so much reason to love and respect, and I answered M. de Voltaire that I was sure he would easily find the answer to the riddles. When I left the drawing-room, he begged me to look upon his house as mine, and he went into his room. I think whilst he was there he finished reading the letters from my friends in which I am so well treated; for shortly afterwards he came back and joined me in his garden. For a long while I walked alone with him. I only talked of what could console him for the injustice of men, the bitterness of which I saw he still felt. 'Ah!' I said to him, 'if you could

only hear the acclamations of public assemblies when your name is mentioned, how pleased you would be at our gratitude and love! Would that I had the power of a god to transport you for one moment thither!' '*I am* there! I am there!' he cried—'I am enjoying it all with you; I no longer regret anything!' Before leaving him, I thanked him for his kindest reception, which repaid me with interest for the two hundred leagues I had just travelled to see him. He would not believe that I had left you and my friends, only to pay him a visit."

Next morning the whole party goes to kiss him in bed, Madame Suard having retired early the night before, that she might not lose the opportunity of seeing "our amiable patriarch in his best moments of good humour."

"I sat down," she continues, "by the side of his bed, which was of the greatest simplicity and the most perfect cleanliness. He was sitting up as straight and firm as a young man of twenty; he had on a beautiful white satin waistcoat and a nightcap tied with a spotless ribbon. The only writing-table he has in his bed, where he always works, is a chessboard. His room struck me by the order which reigned there; it is not like yours, with the books pell-mell and great heaps of

papers; he knows where everything is, and could at once find the papers relating to M. de G.'s case. Close by his bed is the portrait of Madame de Châtelet, of whom he keeps the tenderest memory. But inside his bed he has two engravings of the Calas family."

M. Calas, a Protestant, had been broken on the wheel, because, as his son had been found dead, some fanatical Catholic chose, without a shadow of evidence, to say that his father had killed him to prevent him from turning Papist: Calas' widow and children were put to the torture, and fled for protection to Voltaire, who nobly provided for them at Ferney. Madame Suard, not recognising the picture of the mother and children embracing the condemned man, reproached Voltaire with its sadness.

"‘Ah, Madame, for eleven years I have been unceasingly occupied with that unfortunate family and that of the Sirvens’ (another instance of religious persecution), ‘and during all that time, Madame, I reproached myself with the slightest smile that escaped me, as if it were a crime.’” Here follows a rhapsody upon his services to humanity. “He told me,” she continues, “that the triumph of enlightenment was far from being assured; he spoke of the arbitrariness of man’s

destiny and of the prejudices which had hitherto surrounded his childhood. 'The nurse,' he said, 'leaves a mark like this,' and he showed me the whole length of his arm; 'and reason, when it follows her, only leaves one no longer than my finger. No, Madame, we ought to fear all things from a man brought up by a fanatic.' This topic led him to dwell on the absurdity of the cause which had produced such long and flagrant evils; he went over a portion of Jesus Christ's life, made merry over his miracles, and became enraged over his fanaticism. I defended him as one of the philosophers I loved best; I told him that I only acknowledged such of Christ's qualities as harmonised with the rest of his life: his love for the weak and unhappy; those words which more than once he spoke to women, and which are either of the sublimest philosophy or the most touching indulgence. 'Oh yes,' he replied, with a glance and a smile of the most amiable malice. 'As for you women, he treated you so well that when you take up his defence, it is only what you owe him.'"

They concluded by talking of d'Alembert; of La Harpe, in whom Voltaire placed all his hopes for the drama; of Saint Lambert, "at whose table reason, heart, and appetite were equally

satisfied"; and of Condorcet, whom Voltaire regarded as the light of philosophy, comparable to himself in zeal for humanity and in hatred of fanaticism or oppression. He earnestly bids her keep Condorcet's friendship. "Oh, sir," she answers, "the friendship of my good Condorcet is of greater price to me than any treasure, and I would not sacrifice it for the empire of the universe."

Coming events do not always cast their shadows before them. A time was to arrive when these fervent words were found of no other use than to add themselves to the ironies of life.

"When tired by long work, he enters his drawing-room," continues the narrative, "he lends himself to the subject in hand, without attempting to direct the conversation, giving himself up either to general topics or to oneself with the greatest simplicity. But if some piece of news comes from Paris, if he hears of an interesting event, his mind instantly fastens on it with undivided attention. The evening of my arrival, he heard that the Abbé de Lignon had just been put in the Bastille, and that all his papers had been seized. He shed tears over the poor man's misfortune, and spoke with the keenest indignation



of this act of despotism. It is this lively sensibility, so easily moved, which makes him instantly identify himself with any victim he may hear of, so that he may lend him all the support of his genius. And his genius is, in reality, the offspring of his sensibility, for I believe with Vauvenargues, that 'genius comes from agreement and harmony between soul and intellect.'"

They soon descend from these high regions of philanthropy to the humbler domain of domestic happiness. She talks about Suard, the choice of her heart, and shows Voltaire his portrait. "There is but one destiny, sir, which could have weighed in my heart against the joy of being M. Suard's wife," cries the combustible little lady. "I mean that of being your niece, and devoting my whole life to you." "Ah, my dear child," retorts the patriarch, "I should have joined your hands; I should have given you my blessing!" "He was superb to-day," she runs on. "When I appeared, Madame de Luchet said to me, 'M. de Voltaire, who knows, Madame, that you think him very handsome in full dress, has to-day put on his wig and his best dressing-gown.'" They proceeded (presumably not in this costume) to drive in his coach to the woods, she kissing his hand all the way, in spite of the

presence of a Russian gentleman, who never ceases to congratulate her on her youth and beauty. The highly scented atmosphere of the *carrosse* grows indeed rather stifling. It is a relief when Voltaire and the Russian begin to talk of the Empress Catherine, "who has more mind and energy than any sovereign in Europe."

The puzzle of the life at Ferney is to find out when they had time for sleep. Conversation flowed, a brilliant and artificially lighted torrent, which never seemed to exhaust any member of the circle. Madame Suard probably never slept a wink the whole time she was there, for she rose at six, so that she might visit him at eight, spending, we may suppose, at least an hour in prayer that she might say the right thing. It is to her honour that she thought more of getting her mind ready than her person. She never knew till the end of her visit that he liked to see women in fine clothes, and did not appear well dressed till her last morning at Ferney.

His mood was often changed, even during her short stay—his mercurial temper, doubtless, lending him much of his magic. One day he was merry and serene; another, sad and tired. On such occasions, Madame Denis infuriated our breathless acolyte by ignoring his symptoms and

treating him as if he were a captious child. "Yesterday I was a philosopher, to-day I am a rascal!" he cries. But whatever his disposition, adds Madame Suard, "there could never be the least vacuum in his life," even had his congregation allowed him the chance of any.

Her brother, she tells us, next arrived to see him, and had hardly been there an instant when he set off reciting Voltaire's favourite amongst his own works—*La Pucelle*. "He *only* interrupted (though to us the interruption seems no light one) by saying, 'But that is not the way to recite verse!' and proceeded to show the unabashed and enraptured Panckoucke how to declaim, his tones giving a new cadence and harmony to the lines."

"He spoke of Ferney," she writes another day, "which he has populated, which owes its existence to him. He congratulated himself upon it. I remembered these lines, and quoted them to him: 'I have done a little good—that is my finest work.' He was told that if ever his works were lost, he would find them again quite whole in my head. 'Then they will be revised,' he said, with inimitable grace—and (as he had given me his hand, which I was kissing) 'Just look,' he exclaimed, kissing mine, 'what I allow her to do! It is because it is so sweet,'"

This effusion over, they returned to literary themes: "As for Condorcet's *Praise of Pascal*, he told me that he thought it so beautiful that it terrified him. 'What do you mean, sir?' I asked. 'Yes, Madame, if Pascal *was* such a great man, then all of us are great fools for not thinking like him. M. Condorcet will do us a great wrong if he publishes this book just as he sent it to me. That Racine,' he added, 'was a good Christian is not extraordinary. He was a poet, a man of imagination. But Pascal was a reasoner, and it is impossible to use reasoning *against* our side. After all, he was only a diseased enthusiast, and had perhaps as little good faith as his antagonists.' I did not care to try and prove to him that a great man could also be a good Christian. I preferred to go on hearing him. He told us about his brother the Jansenist, who had such a fine zeal for martyrdom that he said one day to a friend (who thought like himself, but would never allow any exposure in the cause of perfection), 'Confound you! If you don't wish to be hanged yourself, at any rate don't take away the taste for it from other folk.' After having spent a delightful hour, I feared I had abused his kindness. All the happiness I enjoy in seeing and hearing him always vanishes before my fear

of tiring him. Even if the interest he inspires in me did not force me to watch all his movements and spare him the slightest sense of fatigue, I should still do so from vanity; for I had been told he had a way of showing his exhaustion which I was always careful to forestall. He led me back to the door of his room, in spite of all my entreaties. When we got there, I said to him, 'Sir, I am soon about to start on a long journey. I entreat you to give me your blessing. I shall look upon it as a surer amulet against all dangers than that of our Holy Father.' He smiled with infinite grace, and, leaning against his study door, he gave me a look at once soft and penetrating, and seemed embarrassed as to what he ought to do. At last he said to me, 'But I can't bless you with my three fingers; I would rather put my two arms round your neck'—and then he embraced me. He no longer appears at table, and he does not dine; he remains in bed nearly all day; works there till eight o'clock; then he asks for supper, and for three months he has supped on nothing but scrambled eggs, though there is always a good fowl ready, in case he should have a fancy for it. All the villagers who pass Ferney also find a dinner ready for them, and twenty-four *sol/s* for travelling money. Fare-

well, dear husband. I can only talk of the great man, for only he interests me here. . . . You may be jealous if you like, but it is a fact that I have a deep passion for him."

She told Voltaire that she had written to inform her husband that she had fallen in love, an announcement which Suard no doubt bore with as great equanimity as he would have shown at the final parting between his wife and her idol. Voltaire was in bed. She pressed him to her breast. "You found me dying," he said, "but my heart will always be yours." She wept; no doubt he followed suit. The only consolation for either was the thought of the autumn, when he begged her to return with Suard, Condorcet, and d'Alembert—a combination which unfortunately never came off.

The great event was over. She had come, she had seen, she had been conquered. There was nothing for it but to return to her Parisian hearth and fall back into her old habits. We cannot but sympathise with the sense of flatness which must have attacked her on her homeward journey. But enthusiasm happily finds fuel for itself; a great man's words are a possession for life; and Suard was awaiting her at home, as eager to hear as she was to tell.

When Voltaire came to Paris, some years later, she saw him again on three separate occasions, and her husband had much of his companionship. It was for the last time. Not long afterwards he died, leaving, at least in one heart, a perfect memory and an unspotted ideal.

### CHAPTER III

“ALL Paris,” Madame Necker writes to Grimm in 1773, “is divided between Grétry and Gluck. . . . The *Praise of Colbert* continues to have the greatest success. . . . Madame Geoffrin continues to scold me, to her great satisfaction and to mine. . . . M. Suard is catching flies with charming dexterity.”

The Parisians were, in fact, torn by two wars, the one of Economists, the other of Artists. Necker's *Praise of Colbert*, which had not long appeared, raised first enthusiasm and then a hailstorm of pamphlets. It applied to the subject which French statesmen were then debating—the question of the Corn Laws. Turgot, with his eyes on the future, descried something approaching Free Trade; Necker, regarding the past, wished for regulated Protection; whilst financiers, theoretic and practical, ranged themselves on either side. The battle spread from club to



drawing-room, and the fashionable topics of discussion were the respective merits of Sully and Colbert, or of Henry IV. and Louis XIV., not as kings, but as administrators of the Exchequer.

The appearance of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (translated at once into French by Madame Riccoboni) gave a new zest to the dispute, which had but little definite result, and was eventually merged in the more important questions which raised the Revolution.

Suard had once said that his wife would never understand *Net-produce*; it was certainly for no want of opportunity. Though he remained judicially neutral, they were both active spectators of a contest in which all their best friends were engaged.

The dominant figure amongst them was the ambitious and impulsive Madame de Marchais, who had taken up the Suard with warmth, and made much of Amélie, whom she invited to all her grandest suppers. If Madame Necker ruled the *Philosophes*, Madame de Marchais was certainly queen of the Economists. "Exceedingly small, with a doll's foot and an enormous head adorned by the most beautiful *cendré* hair that was ever seen," and stored with every politico-

economical work that had been written, she appears in the midst of her sparkling company like the elf of statistics, a science for which she had a genuine passion. The daughter of the Pompadour's valet, and distantly connected with that lady, she always remained her favourite, and distinguished herself at her little suppers by her gift for music and a sweet voice. Later she was made "Housekeeper of the Louvre,"—the one office where her economical tendencies did not manifest themselves,—and spent her time between the Pavillon de Flore in the palace, and her house at Versailles. It was both consistent and practical that a State housekeeper should fall in love with a State gardener, as Madame de Marchais proceeded to do, in spite of being already comfortably married. She formed an attachment to M. d'Angé-villiers, Superintendent of the Royal Garden, and called "the Angel Gabriel," on account of his radiant beauty, who expressed his tenderness for her by frequent gifts of the King's pears, enormous in size. Her taste for these (which she learned to cultivate assiduously in her own grounds) grew to rival her zeal for economics, and earned her the name of Pomona from Madame du Deffand, who made unmerciful fun of her small foot, much-displayed teeth, big head, and

all that was in it. "Madame de Marchais," she wrote, "has a face like a Jew pedlar; her person measures four foot, her head about six, and her *coiffure* about ten. She talks volumes, and writes folios—I mean in billets."

Whether from fear of her superior intellect, or from eighteenth-century tolerance, M. de Marchais made no objection to his wife's horticultural predilections, in either of the forms which they assumed. He, M. d'Angéville, and Madame de Marchais, by tacit agreement, made a sort of queer triangular problem in which the two angles at the base were apparently equal. In the lady's letters, at any rate, the names of both gentlemen appear impartially intertwined; for in one sentence she describes M. d'Angéville helping her with her accounts, and the next, her own hurry to start for Fontainebleau, where M. de Marchais required her services.

The "Angel Gabriel" had perhaps derived his title as much from his temper as his looks. It is certain that his mistress vented the humours of a tyrant upon him. "The chief power of woman is to make a slave of man," she said to Madame Suard. "I prefer to make a hero of him," the latter characteristically replied. It may have been this retort which induced the

slave to embrace Amélie whenever he met her, whether in public or in private. But even this liberty passed off as agreeably as every other of that strange time. "Look how she loves M. d'Angéville!" cried the generous Pomona. "M. Suard will be jealous." "Oh no, Madame," rejoins Amélie. "But why not?" "Because M. Suard shares all my feelings for this gentleman."

"Gabriel" turned the tables upon his lady in after years. When M. de Marchais died, he married her, and, once legally tied, seems to have become an Avenging Angel, and to have exercised much the same despotism over her as she had done over him. Meanwhile, the "Triple Alliance" drew down no social disapproval, but was courted and invited and called upon as if it had been the most respectable old couple.

Madame de Marchais had vast social ambitions, and did not stop at the Economists with whom her salon had begun. To her inclination for their theories and for big pears, she added a third one—for aristocrats. Unfortunately her advances were not warmly returned, and she could not get them to her house. Madame Necker—with whom she had a vehement and short-lived friendship—was meanwhile very

popular in high circles without any desire of being so. Pomona grew jealous, but still found Hypatia's presence necessary to the success of her parties. She invited her on a special occasion, when, after some difficulty, the exclusive Duchesse de Luneville had promised to be present, and Rocher, a minor poet, was to read out his last work. The poet arrived; the Duchess arrived; but no Madame Necker. Manners did not allow the poet to begin till the guest had appeared; the Duchess grew impatient, the hostess was in despair. Madame Necker, having heard Rocher's poem on a previous occasion, had innocently accepted another invitation to hear La Harpe, intending to go afterwards to Madame de Marchais'. Unfortunately, La Harpe insisted on her waiting for him, and when at last they appeared together an hour too late, Madame de Marchais turned her back upon the criminal. Next day she wrote a letter to Madame Necker, solemnly breaking off their friendship.

Her salon was perhaps the most universal in Paris. It was thronged by foreigners, writers, ambassadors, artists, and worldlings, whom her tact fused into one. Politicians were also not wanting, amongst them Mirabeau, of whom she made a staunch friend,

"With the Court set," says Marmontel, "she was a model of the most delicate and noble politeness; young women came to her to study her manner and her tone. With literary people she was on a par with the cleverest and best-informed. Nobody talked with more ease, precision, and method. Her silence was animated by the fire of a glance which showed that her mind was listening; she divined thought, and her retorts were arrows which never missed their mark."

But it was amongst the Economists that she was at her best, and they, as we know, formed the nucleus of her society, and visited her daily, no matter to which camp they belonged. She discarded party-spirit, read both sides, declared herself for neither, and influenced them much more than if she had been a special pleader. She became, however, if not the partisan, at any rate the exponent, of the Protectionist Quesnay, who, as Madame de Pompadour's quondam physician, was naturally inclined to patch the old order of things rather than venture on fresh enterprises. Though the public despised his science, she recognised solid merit in it, aired his works by raising discussions on them, and did him much the same service as Madame de Châtelet, a genera-

tion before her, had rendered to Newton and to Leibnitz.

More prominent, both in this controversy and in her drawing-room, were the two Abbés—the Free-Trader Morellet and his vivacious opponent Galiani, who instituted for themselves a private ramification of the main quarrel, and launched pamphlet after pamphlet on wheat at each other's heads; a fact which did not prevent the most amicable meetings in society. Galiani, with his "power of startling," excluded the possibility of pedantry in any dispute, however arid, in which he was concerned.

"He was," to quote Marmontel again, "the prettiest little harlequin produced by Italy; but on the shoulder of this harlequin was the head of Machiavelli. An Epicurean in his philosophy, with a melancholy soul and an eye for the ridiculous in everything, there was no topic either political or moral about which he had not some good story to tell; and his stories were always justified by their aptness and the salt of an unforeseen and ingenious allusion. . . . I am not exaggerating when I say that one forgot everything for hours together, in listening to him. But his part once played, he was no longer anything in society; sad and dumb, in a corner, he looked

as if he were impatiently awaiting his cue to reappear on the stage. . . . If ever one interrupted him—'Let me finish,' said he; 'you will have plenty of time to answer me,' . . . and when he had done, if one attempted a reply, one saw him slip away into the crowd and gently make his escape."

His translation of Horace was enthusiastically reviewed by Suard; but it was at the Philosophers' Suppers, where he waxed warm over Plato and Pythagoras, that he most distinguished himself. His more affectionate side he showed to Madame Necker. He had only one reproach to make to her, that of "observing the cold behaviour of respectability," to which his previous friendship with Madame d'Epinay had doubtless disused him. "It was a pity," he said, "that she had so many principles in her head and so few inconsequences in her heart." He went so far as to make her a declaration in public, at which, says he, "she was scandalised, Madame Suard astonished, and Madame the Housekeeper of the Louvre indignant. The town resounded with it; the suburbs bewailed it; the kingdom was in combustion—and all the world forgave me." Madame Necker consoled him by working a pair of slippers, an attention which in all times seems to have been considered as a fitting compromise between



effusion and propriety. But she was always indulgent to him. "There is not a single Friday," he writes to her during an absence at Naples, "when I do not go to you in spirit. I arrive ; I find you now putting the finishing touches to your dress, now stretched on your sofa. I sit down at your feet. Thomas suffers silently, Morellet rages aloud, Suard laughs with his whole heart, my dear Comte de Creutz never notices it ; Marmontel finds the example worthy of imitation ; and you, Madame, allow your two sweetest virtues, modesty and politeness, to fight with each other, whilst, in the midst of your discomfort, you think me a little monster, more embarrassing than odious. Dinner is announced. We go out. The others eat their fill ; as for me, I fast, and eat a great deal of that green Scotch cod which I like so much. I give myself indigestion in the midst of my admiration for the Abbé Morellet's ardour in carving a turkey. We rise from table and sip our coffee ; everybody is talking at once. The Abbé Raynal agrees with me that Boston and English America have for ever separated from England, and at the same moment Creutz and Marmontel agree that Grétry is the Pergolese of France. M. Necker thinks this a good remark, bows his head, and departs."

Quite as many-sided and somewhat weightier was the intellect of the Abbé Morellet, "whose regular Parisian wit" stood out against a solid background. He began life with no money in his pockets, and was protected by the Neckers.

"He has knowledge, talents, philosophy, and method," Madame Necker writes of him; "otherwise he is an ill-groomed cub, who does not dream that worldly wisdom exists, or that the universe consists of great and small, of men and women; he has candour, honesty, a thousand good habits, and enough religion to suspect that there may be a God, and sometimes to confess as much to his friends, when he knows they are discreet and reliable. Still, I love him, and I think God will forgive him his unbelief, which does not come from the heart."

It remained for Marmontel, who married his niece and afterwards lived with him, to depict his mind—"that fountain of ideas, pure, wholesome, and profound, which never dried up and never overflowed; and his special gift of irony only comparable to that of Swift," and (according to his polite compatriot) under stronger control than the Dean's. There was no French controversy in which he did not play a leading part, and he was seldom out of a fray. Grimm once

declared that "he always carried a ledger underneath his philosopher's cloak." His actions were unfortunately not always on a level with his gifts. He made a somewhat ungenerous attack upon a company in which his generous patron, M. Necker, was interested, and created a coldness between them. Necker was obliged to defend himself in a vigorous pamphlet, which did not prevent Morellet (after the fifty kicks administered by the pen of his host) from continuing to dine at his table, as if nothing had happened.

He was a seeker of society, and himself had a special reputation as a host. He held the chief musical salon of Paris—a department in which he had no rivals but the Saurins, the Baucis and Philemon of the artistic circle, who always ended their evenings by a toast to Madame Saurin, drunk by M. Saurin, then past eighty years old. The Parisians called the latter Anacreon, because, glass in hand, he used to sing happiness in graceful verses, and pray to live a little longer. One of his prettiest poems was addressed to "The Little Household," to which he thus first gave its name. The Suardes indeed knew him intimately and describe him with affection, but Morellet, whom they also frequented, provided greater excitement,

He had Sunday breakfasts, and in order to lend charm to the stern morning hour, he used his chapel for musical performances of exquisite beauty. Here many masterpieces of that day, and some that lasted longer, actually saw the light. Gluck, then in Paris, came frequently with his niece, who was called "The Little Muse," and with Mélico, the singer, his devoted friend and follower. It was at the Abbé's that the Suards heard "Orfeo," then performed for the first time by a masterly staff of two: Mélico was Orfeo, and Gluck with his single voice represented the multitude of demons who resist him as he descends into Hades. So terrible, we hear, were the implacable "*Non, Non, Nons,*" that the whole audience was seized with horror and held its breath in suspense.

Grétry, the writer of operas, was there too, now amongst the audience, now as a conductor of his own works, aided by his favourite singer, Philidor, of whom he said that "he was only a fool, for he possessed nothing but genius." Nor were the minor celebrities debarred from performing. Morellet himself used to sing finely whilst in his chapel. Hulmandel, the harmonica-player, introduced that instrument to his applaud-

ing hearers. Sometimes the musical talk gave way before literary themes; for these musicians were many-sided, and a standing reproach to the artists who try to do without culture. Gluck himself was imbued with Montaigne; many of the others were men of letters; all of them were interested in current questions.

It was not surprising that so musical a salon, with a controversialist as host, should have become a centre of the second and greater battle that was dividing the town—the famous musical contest between Gluck and Piccini. Madame Necker, as we know, spoke of it as between Gluck and Grétry, the old-world Court musician whom Marmontel ranked with Piccini, though he was not essentially Italian in his style. But Piccini, “the Pergolese of France,” was distinctly the leader of his party and a solid composer, to some extent a reformer of the opera, anxious to develop orchestration and dramatic unity. Marmontel was his librettist. Their forgotten operas of “Roland” and “Atys” created a sensation in their day; whilst poor Louis XVI. pronounced the composer’s “Didon” to be the only opera that had ever interested him.

Gluck had been Marie Antoinette’s singing-master in Vienna; he was sent to Paris by the

Emperor Joseph about 1774, with an Imperial recommendation to her, as strong as if the success of German music had been a matter of State importance. He was prepared for victory by the love of his Fatherland for learned music; by his triumphs in Rome, Naples, and Parma; and by the admiration of Padre Martini, the most erudite of the old musicians of Europe; and was therefore not surprised at the effect produced by his "Orfeo," the revised version of which was performed in Paris in 1776. Suard, himself a lover of music and a fine singer, together with his colleague, l'Abbé Arnaud, did more than anybody else to establish his popularity by their *Journal Étranger*, in which they discussed the fundamental principles of art: Arnaud's review of "Alceste" was a literary triumph, and both of them, together with the Queen, remained Gluck's devoted champions, and made many proselytes. Jean Jacques, by a sort of left-handed conversion, was actually brought to believe in the possibility of music in France after hearing "Orfeo," and when asked what he thought of it, could only reply by humming, "J'ai perdu mon Eurydice," through his streaming tears.

The cudgels were hotly taken up for Piccini.

Marmontel declared that Gluck was as inferior to the old Italian classics, Pergolese and Leo, as Crébillon was to Racine, and added that he had no melody. La Harpe grumbled that "he put things into melody which could not be sung," d'Alembert that there was too much *din* in it. Their less important followers gave out that if only Piccini's genius could be brought to bear upon Gluck's methods, the greatest masterpieces as yet heard by the world might now be produced. The quarrel spread from club to drawing-room, from drawing-room to street. The crowd took it up; many of the Piccinists, we are told (La Harpe amongst them), did not know one note of music from another. The Cafés Foi and Caveau and the Salle de l'Opéra became the citadels of the campaign, the *Journal Étranger* and the *Gazette Littéraire* its scouts. Then there appeared a brilliant answer to La Harpe's accusation, dated from Vaugirard, and followed by a series of letters from the same hand, which, according to a contemporary, might be compared to the eighteen *Petites Lettres* of Pascal. Many guesses were hazarded about their author, who was only known as the "Recluse of Vaugirard," and remained for some time shrouded in mystery. He turned out at last to be no other than Suard, unconscious of the

train he had started. Diderot and Rousseau mixed themselves up in it, and the musical dispute turned into a serious literary war. "You will see," wrote Suard, "that friends will grow estranged, society will divide, and hatred be kindled—all for a song. The public will perhaps be the gainer, for quarrels amuse it, but the actors in this brawl will lose their dignity, their peace, and the fruits they could have reaped had they attempted union."

Suard was talking from experience. He himself was always ready for peace, and even gave some kindly praise to Piccini; but Arnaud never abated in bitterness, a fact which Marmontel could not ignore. A coldness arose between the two households, which Madame Suard tried hard to remove. But she did not succeed till the breaking out of the Revolution, when their common devotion to the King formed a reconciling bond. Hardly less stringent were Grétry's friends, Madame d'Houdetot and Saint Lambert, who for several years refused to speak to the Little Household. Time, however, brought healing with it, and in after days they resumed their intercourse with the same warmth as before.

Meanwhile, as tournament methods were obsolete, it was determined that Gluck and Piccini



should settle their quarrel by harmony. The same subject, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, was set them both. Gluck's opera appeared first (in 1779), and carried its audience by storm. Piccini's, retarded by a series of misadventures, was only given later, and fell sadly flat, though the Piccinists by no means considered themselves finally beaten. But the approaching political crisis swallowed up the last fragments of the quarrel—much to the regret of a writer of the day, who deplores that a national Revolution should have prevented so important a struggle from coming to a definite issue.

In the midst of these social controversies, Suard's interests had not been neglected. In 1774 he was made Censor of the Drama, an office which he fulfilled in a spirit more puritanical than it was Parisian, for he began by suppressing the plays of Beaumarchais as hostile to morality. Perhaps it was the presentiment of this condemnation which made the latter oppose Suard's appointment; at any rate, the Censor seemed to have been justified in his verdict, for it was a common saying at the time that "if Beaumarchais chastised morals with a laugh, he chastised them too much, for he wounded them." Suard's honours did not stop here. Soon after his acceptance of this office, the King pressed him to

accept the English ambassadorship. His love of Paris made him refuse this, though his three trips to London, the last with M. Necker, increased his admiration for the English. He imitated them in many respects, both morally and socially.

It is interesting to find that this feeling was not peculiar to him. This period seems to have been distinguished by a special sympathy between the two nations. "The wars between France and England," says a writer of that day, "have been too commonly taken for their hatreds, and it has not been sufficiently recognised that their hatred is a tradition, not a feeling. Their battles are too much like duels, in which there is generally little hatred, but, alas! too frequent an opportunity for piercing the heart of the person one loves and esteems." Science and literature alike formed a bond between them, and the works of either country acted and reacted upon each other. In science, Descartes was corrected by Newton, Newton developed by d'Alembert and, later, by Laplace. Montesquieu had succeeded Hobbes and Locke as an interpreter of social law; La Fontaine, Molière, and La Bruyère led up to Swift, Addison, and Steele; and Adam Smith, as we have seen, coincided with the progress of French economics.

It was, at all events, enough for a man to have

been born in the British Islands for Suard to welcome him to his salon, then at its zenith. It rapidly became the centre of the English and Scotch, whether illustrious or obscure, who were living in Paris—and there was certainly no lack of them.

Here in due season came Laurence Sterne, the Briton for whom France has perhaps shown more enthusiasm than for any other, hailing him as the apostle of sensibility, and therefore (in their eyes) of morality.

It was probably either just before or just after the translation of *Tristram Shandy*, that he appeared in Paris. Voltaire was among the first to hail him. Writing about conscience, he tells us that "the best things which have been said upon these questions are to be found in a humorous book called *Tristram Shandy*, written by a Curé named Sterne. It is just like those little Satires of the Ancients, which enclose precious essences."

In later days, he called him "the second Rabelais of England," the first being naturally represented by Swift. "In all three," he goes on to say, "the fooling and the philosophy are very near to each other—so near that they are often on the point of fusion. But Rabelais and Swift

suggest thought in the middle of a laugh, and never move one to tears, whilst in Sterne thought, laughter, and emotion are blended in one page, or even one sentence."

Suard early conceived a great admiration for Yorick as the "discoverer of the new and the true in literature." He wrote such successful imitations of him, that it was said he could easily have deceived a certain impulsive gentleman who offered a large sum of money, through the newspapers, to the person who would bring him one page of Sterne that he did not already know. Anxious for even further initiation into Sterne's magic, Suard once asked him the secret of his genius: "First, my imagination and my sensibility; then my daily reading of the Old and New Testament—the books alike of my choice and my profession; lastly, my study of Locke, from childhood onwards."

History unfortunately does not relate whether Suard returned to his desk, made Amélie get him his Bible and *Human Understanding*, and sat down to write a humorous novel under her expectant and confiding eyes.

It was certainly the sensibility which took the fancy of the French, especially of their ladies. *Tristram Shandy* was hardly read, in comparison

with *The Sentimental Journey*, excepting by such choice spirits as Voltaire, Joubert, and Pauline de Beaumont. In revenge, they made their *Sentimental Journey* into a test of good taste. Madame Suard would not speak for some months to a lady who had said that she could not feel Sterne's rapture in pressing the fingers of the lady who wore black silk gloves, and that "it only made her die of laughter."

Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was one of his most appreciative readers, and went so far as to write *A Walk to the Hôtel des Invalides and the Military School*, in the style of Sterne. Only a certain Mademoiselle de Sommerie (of obscure fame as a maxim-writer) appears to have exercised an independent judgment. "He could not depict so many madmen," she announced, "unless he were mad himself; but it will go hard with him if he ever takes off his mask, or drops it."

His conduct was as emotional as his writings. Suard and he were once walking on the Pont Neuf, with its bronze statue of Henry IV. Yorick suddenly prostrated himself before it, and knelt as if in prayer. An amazed crowd gathered round him. "Why are you all staring at me?" he cried. "Imitate me, one and all!"—on which the mercurial mob instantly fell upon their knees.

After this, we need not be surprised at Sterne's success in France. His love affairs gained him still louder plaudits. "This Anglican minister," writes a French contemporary, "singularly amused the gay wits of Paris by his racy originality, and gave new emotions to tender souls by a sensibility the most *naïve*, the most prompt, and touching. He had a wife who was very much his own: he loved Eliza, who was another's. And neither of them, nor both of them, could prevent his falling in love every moment with a momentary passion for every woman whose charm had touched him"—a fugitiveness of heart, which was mysteriously considered in Paris "to preserve the purity of his cult."

The only objection made to him was his frequent description of common things—the engaging of a footman, or the giving of alms to a beggar. Madame Suard, in an article she wrote upon him, confesses that in other hands she would find such events dull; "but I think," she concludes, "that the charm of sensitive people comes from their power of animating and kindling everything. Do not you often feel that it is not so much a want of mind that is tedious, but a want of soul, which brings languor and death with it? . . . Sterne might almost do without his mind."

This could not be said of Gibbon, another friend of Suard's. Perhaps it was to pretty little Amélie that he fled to be soothed, when he was stung by the confidence which Necker showed in retiring to bed, and leaving him alone with his wife at midnight. "He is an insolent madman!" the humiliated historian exclaimed. Nevertheless, he did not discontinue his attendance on the Neckers, and it was there that the Suards usually came across him—a short figure strutting across the room. "The immense trunk of his body, of Silenus proportions, was balanced upon spare, lean legs, whilst his huge turned-in feet embarrassed one another. The roots of his nose were more deeply sunk in his skull than a Kalmuck's, and his voice was shrill." Even Suard confesses that he felt less drawn to Gibbon than to any other Englishman, and did not hesitate to deal severely with the ornate elegance of his style.

His relations with David Hume were much warmer. He was one of the first Scotchmen who resided in France. After three years at Rheims, and still longer at La Flèche, where he wrote much, he came to Paris. His minor works were much more appreciated in France than in England; indeed, it was said that his *Investigations of the*

*Principles of Morality* were only read by one Englishman—and that was David Hume. Like Sterne, he found his best public amongst the ladies, whose charms he describes with warmth. As for his history, Voltaire pronounced it to be better than Tacitus or Livy. "Never," he writes, "has the public felt more keenly that it only belongs to philosophers to write history. Mr. Hume does not appear to be either a Constitutionalist, or a Royalist, or an Anglican, or a Presbyterian. One discovers nothing of himself excepting his superior mind and equable temper. He speaks of weakness, error, and barbarism like a doctor, as if they were epidemics."

The only time he was known to let a cry escape him was during his relations with Rousseau. Hume, it was said, "Had found the means to be neither deist nor materialist, whilst Jean Jacques surrounded the Eternal Throne by his criticism." Whether or no this contrast arose from difference of disposition, it is difficult to discover; but certain it is that Hume was dazzled by Rousseau's company. Under the impression that he alone understood this victim of the world's injuries, and that living with him would be paradise, he insisted on taking him to England, against the warnings of Holbach. "At first all



went well: the English caressed him, the King protected him, he tolerated them all. His friends in Paris abandoned their fears, and pictured him and Hume in each other's arms." One evening, when they were all assembled at Holbach's supper-table, a letter was brought to him from Hume.

"My dear Baron," it ran, "Rousseau is a scoundrel! He has boxed my ears."

It enclosed a note from Rousseau to Hume, beginning: "You are a traitor! You only brought me here to ruin me after dishonouring me!"

"Just as I expected," was Holbach's only comment.

There seemed to be no better motive for this dissension than the fact that one day Jean Jacques had not had enough visitors to satisfy him, and that he was living in the house of a gentleman who would not admit Rousseau's housekeeper to dine with his wife. The regenerator of mankind thereupon parted from Hume for ever, got a royal pension, and retired to Derbyshire, where he was entertained for some months by a certain Mr. Davenport. But in the spring he suddenly departed with his housekeeper. He had no other reason than the latter's quarrel

with "Mr. Davenport's cook-maid, who had dressed their dinner very ill, and at last had sprinkled ashes on their victuals." Convinced that he should be assassinated on his journey, he demanded a military escort to Dover, and returned to France. He had meanwhile revenged himself on Hume by publishing all the correspondence relating to their quarrel. Hume answered by a detailed account of the whole affair, to which Rousseau offered no reply. Suard, who took up Hume's defence, had to investigate all the papers, but never found any adequate cause for the mutual invective.

Adam Smith, Ferguson, and Robertson were as much talked of in Paris as Hume, and Adam Smith's visit there was described as "the most glorious received by France." His mind had been much affected by the writings of Diderot, Condillac, and Coppineau; whilst his *Wealth of Nations*, in its turn, greatly influenced them. It was translated both by Madame Condorcet and by Garnier. Suard had also thought of undertaking the task, but got no further than appreciating and criticising it. Smith, he said, was not obscure, but over-abundant in expression. He added to his criticism a warm friendship, not only for Smith, but for his disciple, Douglas Stewart,

who frequented his salon both in town and country.

Political guests were by no means wanting. The fame of the popular Lord Bolingbroke, as brilliant a talker as he was a plotter in the Paris of 1735, still survived him. It was kept green by Voltaire's dedication of a book to him; still more by the memoirs of him written by his personal friend, Saint Lambert, and criticised by his admirer Suard. But even in those days the French men of letters began by looking askance upon him as a Tory, in spite of their discovery that "Tories and Whigs were two sects of the same religion"; or of Saint Lambert's—"What matters it to me if a man be Tory or Whig, Bolingbroke or Walpole? I only wish to see in the remainder of the former party that which can be useful to mankind at all times." The birth-place of liberty ever preferred a Whig, and was eager to welcome such a one, when some forty years later he actually arrived in the person of the witty dare-devil, John Wilkes.

His reputation had preceded him, and "the firebrand," as Rousseau called him, soon set the Seine aflame. For "grace and sublimity" he was compared to Voltaire; the distinction of his English origin—betrayed by "*L'Hyumour*" (*sic*)

—was envied by all, and the mention of him in the Comte de Grammont's Memoirs was but the expression of universal admiration.

He early became intimate with Suard, between whom and himself the converse was usually political. "They rarely agreed, and everything that divided them bound them more closely one to another. M. Suard was really a Tory dressed in eighteenth-century philosophy." They had one particular discussion about party Government. Both, for different reasons, considered it necessary: Wilkes as a check upon Ministers who feared to lose their places through the Opposition; Suard as an incentive to debate, and a test of public opinion.

But the most attractive — and perhaps the closest — of Suard's English friends was David Garrick. He had been known by Madame Suard before her marriage, during his first journey to France; Suard had become acquainted with him in London. From the first, they found each other congenial company, and during Garrick's later visits to Paris, were, as we have heard, seldom seen apart. The actor's success in France, both as an artist and as a man, was assured from the beginning. It was prepared by the preconceived idea of his genius current

amongst Parisians, no less than by the fact that he had a Frenchwoman for his mother, and was a finished master of the French tongue. He longed, however, for a finer accent, his great wish being to play with French actors, and to institute a kind of international drama which should send French *troupes* to London and English ones to Paris, for the mutual benefit of the two countries. Suard supported him in his desire, and dwelt more especially upon the advantages to be gained from an interchange of *répertoires*.

It is curious to find how great a respect for our stage then prevailed in France. Riccoboni, the chief dramatic critic of that day, said that the most perfect dramatic talent, of both kinds, was to be found in London; Suard, that England especially breathed the tragic spirit, and only used its comedy to relax its spleen. "The genius of Shakespeare," he exclaims, "is the English genius. The genius of Garrick is that of Shakespeare, and because Garrick makes Shakespeare better understood, nearly all England places the actor above the author."

This was perhaps a little more than the truth; London hailed Garrick rather as a reviver of Shakespeare than as his superior. It was from a newspaper of that time, at all events, that

“Davy” himself quotes the rhyme which invokes  
heir joint muses—

“Take pity, Garrick, on our erring youth,  
Restore their minds to Shakespeare and to truth !  
Return, return ! our hopes are all in thee ;  
Save us from tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee !”

The first actors in Paris at that time were Prévillè and Le Kain, who was admired by La Harpe and hated by Marmontel ; their chief actress was the Mademoiselle Clairon, whom we have already met. He had a tempered admiration for her.

“You cannot imagine, my dear Colman,” he writes during one of his visits, “what honours I have received from all kinds of people here. The nobles and the *litterati* have made so much of me, that I am quite ashamed of opening my heart, even to you. Marmontel has written me the most flattering letter upon our supping together ; I was in spirits, and so was the Clairon, who supped with us at Mrs. Neville’s. *She* got up to set *me* a-going, and spoke something in Racine’s ‘*Athalie*’ most charmingly ; upon which I gave them the dagger-scene in ‘*Macbeth*,’ the curse in ‘*Lear*,’ and the falling asleep in ‘*Sir John Brute*’ ; the consequence of which is that I am now stared at in the playhouse, and talked of by gentle and simple, as the most wonderful

wonder of wonders. . . . D'Alembert was one of the company, and sings my praises to all the authors of the Encyclopædia. . . . I am this moment going to see a new piece at the Italian Comedy, taken from our 'Tancred and Sigismunda.' It had a very indifferent success, but Clairon was great; she has her faults, between you and me; but I do not say so here, for she idolises me."

This was not a unique occasion. His goodwill was as unfailing as his popularity. "Unlike the singers who cannot perform without an instrument or sometimes even an orchestra," says a French contemporary, "Garrick, without waiting for desire to become prayer, alone, and surrounded by faces that almost touched his, played the greatest scenes of the English drama. His everyday coat or cloak, his hat, his boots or shoes, just as he arranged them, became costumes best suited for every part. The only precautions he thought fit to take in the presence of so many spectators (who did not understand English quickly enough for his rapid utterance) were translations made by Suard. The latter declared that they were quite needless: Garrick's pantomime was the noblest, most energetic and pathetic of translations. His

gestures gave us ravishment : his accents made us weep."

The only person Suard thought comparable to him was Talma, but not until he had seen the latter in "Hamlet," "and only at those moments when passion becomes a madness rather than a fury." Holbach was as great an admirer as Suard, and doubtless many a performance took place at his house.

"We had a fine laugh at Baron Holbach's," Garrick writes . . . "about the wicked company I keep ; I am always with that set."

"With that set" we meet him again, chatting with Molé (an actor) about the difficulty of being drunk and yet a gentleman upon the stage. Molé wanted to show him how *he* managed to act the young marquis—his usual part. "Capital!" cried Garrick ; "but make your legs more vinous, and your figure and your head less so. The drunkenness of the People is expressed in its whole body, because it gives itself entirely up to wine : an elegant man, a marquis, never gives up his elegance to it. Look at Michael Angelo's Bacchus : the demi-god is drunk ; he smiles at the liquor, and his cup seems to smile back at him. But he is standing ; he is upright ; you would not suspect that he was drunk excepting by the



slightest tremble of his legs, the only parts of his body with which the demi-god (who has become a god in his intoxication) touches the earth!"

"Perfect!" cries M. Suard; "this alone would prove that actors, like Garrick, are thinkers as complete as great poets or great painters."

Another matter which they discussed was whether imitation was a servile weakness prostrating man before a few literary altars; or whether, with its parent admiration, it was not the germ of all progress and the true means of perfecting science and art. The Abbé Condillac, a theological metaphysician ("who would not have exchanged his share of invention and originality for that of another"), replied that animals hardly possess any powers of imitation, and care to learn nothing beyond eating and drinking; that there are two sorts of imitation—one slavish and impeding all improvement, the other born of genius, and even rising above that which it imitates. "Gentlemen," he concluded, "if the human mind had not been essentially imitative, we should all be dining on acorns at the foot of an oak, and we should none of us be hoping to hear Mr. Garrick by and by. But what does Mr. Garrick himself think about it?"

Garrick, who had been listening with an atten-

tion remarked by all the company, seemed to be interrogating himself and his memories both of his life and his talent ; “ but his manner was that of one to whom experience has brought more doubt than solution.” Forced, however, to answer so direct a question, “ he made some steps as if he were on the stage, placed himself at a little distance from the group of arguers, and quoted, in a voice, half comic, half heroic—

“ ‘ No : let us imitate no one ; but let us all be examples ! ’ ”

This answer, pronounced to be “ perfect in taste and propriety,” created “ a prodigious effect.” M. Suard, at the first moment of silence, observed that the lines Garrick had quoted from a French tragedy became excellent poetry in an Englishman’s mouth, and might have come straight from Young. The plaudits politely transferred themselves to Suard.

Perhaps Garrick especially affected the latter’s salon, because he met not only English and French, but every sort of foreigner there. Here came Alfieri, Madame d’Albany’s husband, who dominated a room by “ the glory of his presence ” alone. His beautiful looks were seldom disturbed by speech, though he loved travel and knew many languages. “ The little gold knob at the top

of his cane, which he kept passing and repassing over his mouth, seemed to shut his lips, whilst his manner of listening made his silence enigmatic." Sometimes he was thought to be a cautious and skilful ignoramus; sometimes a man of genius absorbed in great things. His aim was to create a tragic drama in Italy, but Suard and Arnaud were for a long time the only men whom he let into the secret of his powers; and he sought their advice and judgment and trusted them with his manuscripts. He was one of the evangelists of Liberty, and when the Revolution broke out, made an oration which was "like one of his tragedies put into prose." But events changed his opinions and brought him to the conservatism of his two friends. When asked to account for this, "Ah!" he replied, "I only knew the great people: I did not know the small ones."

There was also the distinguished Gatti, an Italian doctor, and a kind of masculine Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who had spread inoculation, and lived much in Constantinople and near the Black Sea. He had read little, observed much, and believed more in good sense than in culture. He carried out his creed in his profession, and classified all illnesses under two heads—those one dies of, and those one does not. "Gatti ought to have

been Molière's doctor," Suard said ; " but I don't know whether Gatti would have grown more of a sceptic, or Molière more of a believer." He was probably better as a friend than as a physician, and had a particular affection for Madame Suard. " She is the only pretty woman I have never been in love with," he declared, " and one of those whom I have most loved."

At his side we see the Marquis of Beccaria, a zealous Italian, absorbed in his efforts to abolish capital punishment. His *Treatise on Pains and Penalties* was once, we hear, " on the mantelshelf of every salon," and nobody dreamed that his name would not live for ever. One day, at the Suard's' supper-table, there arose a discussion as to the fitting punishment for a man who had just boiled and eaten a child. " Let us ask M. de Beccaria!" cried the rest of the company. " He should be compelled to be a vegetarian for the rest of his life," this authority replied.

M. de Beccaria had a high-flown friendship for the Marquis de Véry, a politico-Economist of some standing. Three feelings were said to bind them together: their friendship for each other; their sentiment for women older than themselves; and their devotion to the rights

and happiness of man. Suard and Morellet had more correspondence with them than with anybody else, and the Abbé and Véry indulged in *tête-à-tête* talks on economics, "for which eternity would have been too short."

The last figure in this group (whose transitory renown invests it with a certain pathos) was the Duke of Braganza, a Portuguese Admirable Crichton. His chief claims to fame were his rescue of a negro, whom he carried away from the Lisbon earthquake on his back, without further assistance; and his marriage at eighty, which resulted in a large family of children.

It was advisable that Suard should make new friends, for his old ones were fast disappearing from the world. The Abbé Arnaud died in 1785; Madame Geoffrin had passed away; and soon after, in spite of her youth, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse also followed her, worn out both in body and in soul. Suard had long been the confidant of her sorrows, and also her counsellor, though not to much effect, for she was as wilful as she was urbane. Till her death she lived with d'Alembert on the warmest terms: he nursed her; wrote her letters for her; and, at the same time, depended on her. But, some time before the end, she had fallen in love with

a romantic gentleman, called Moira, with whom she had fervid relations. He was compelled to a temporary absence abroad. It was fatal to him. Whilst her feeling for him was at its height, and at the same moment that she was writing him the extravagant love-letters which have made her reputation, she came across a certain young man, M. Guibert, who inspired her versatile heart with a second passion of equal magnitude. Her letters to both of them form a literature as eloquent as it is sincere. But the new love soon superseded the old, and when Moira fell mortally ill and died in some foreign town, buoyed up by his confidence in her affection, she summoned M. Guibert from Spain, where he then was. He arrived too late to see her again. Exhausted by the equivocal position of her heart between these two conflicting inclinations, she cut the knot by bidding farewell to the world, cheered to the last by the support of Suard. D'Alembert was inconsolable. He received universal sympathy; notably that of Frederick the Great, who wrote him a letter, "not as a king, but as a friend." Madame Suard was almost the only person he found congenial in his grief. He did not suffer for long; old and infirm, his sorrow broke him

down, and he did not survive his friend by more than eight or nine months.

It was happy that he and his companions in death were spared what was to come. They had scarcely closed their eyes, before the Revolution burst upon France, to deface the image of that radiant Liberty which they had only seen as in a dream.

## CONCLUSION

THE Suard's possess an unquestionable advantage in the eyes of their biographers: they survived the Revolution. This may have been partly due to luck, but it was in great measure the result of Suard's own powers of prudence; he knew the moment when discretion became valour, and withdrew in time. Though he admired the English Government, he did not desire it for all countries. An unswerving supporter of legitimate authority, he called himself a Constitutional Royalist, but his monarchical principles were perhaps the strongest in him. Yet his humane sense of justice made him sympathise with the Revolution, before it was recognised as such. In these early days, the wise men of France were still eager to reconcile old and new by efficient measures. They had no doubt that the reform of the Game Laws



and a new system of taxation would appease the struggling Tiers-État.

The leaders of this noble but inadequate party were Lafayette, Sainte-Croix, and Montmorin, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to whom Suard was closely bound by affection. To their aid he brought both his pen and his energy, his special organ being his own papers, the *Publiciste* and *L'Indépendant*. In these he used his best efforts to preserve the *Académie*, which was soon denounced as a hotbed of aristocracy. Chamfort was loud in demanding its suppression, Suard firm in its defence ; but, in spite of his eloquence, it perished, soon to be followed by most of the persons who had composed it.

The storm was gathering in force, and even Suard's cool head took alarm. He enrolled himself in the Garde Nationale, and awaited events. They were not slow in coming. The two strongholds of the Royalists were the Quartier des Filles Saint Thomas and the Quartier Vendôme ; but the latter, hearing a shout of "They are firing on the people!" went over at once to the enemy. This was just before the storming of the Bastille. Suard escaped unhurt, his heart full of admiration for the Queen and her royal calm. Horror upon horror followed, one close

upon another. "When once we find ourselves alone with the People!" Talleyrand had said somewhat earlier, with a shudder; and events were now to finish his sentence for him. Amélie Suard found herself wondering that the sun still shone and the stars ran their course; and her husband lost all hope for France. After the terrible Massacres of September, when the news of Montmorin's slaughter was brought to him, his spirit failed him. "You will see France turn into one vast tomb!" he exclaimed.

The panic became an epidemic. "Life has become an art," one man was heard to observe; another, who was asked what he thought of the business, replied in a whisper: "What do I think? Why, I hardly dare even *hold my tongue!*" The Suards, robbed by their valet and reduced to the direst straits, could only rejoice that their one child had died in infancy. At last they both succumbed, and were successively confined to their beds by a virulent fever. Their doctor, a personal friend, was so paralysed by terror that he was powerless to help them, and subsequently *died of fear.*

They had now lost all, save a small sum of money, their books, and Fontenai, to which, at this juncture, they retired. Happily they had

nobody but themselves to provide for, Condorcet, their former house-mate, having long since left them to work in remoter seclusion. They had a lodge to their house called "The Cottage of Friends," and this they cleverly let to a young couple who kept house in common with them, and thus halved their expenses. In the evenings the neighbours came in, and a lady was told off to read aloud the great tragedies ; the men discussed them, whilst the women worked. The possibility of so peaceful a routine was due to their luck in possessing a District President of rational temper, who wished for nothing better than to let them alone. They were loth to quit the island they had found for themselves in the ocean of death around them, and their days were spent in welcome monotony, despite the domiciliary visits which were devastating their neighbours' homes. Their contact with calamity was yet to come.

They were at length compelled to spend three days in Paris, and contrived to emerge safely. On their return, they heard that a starved-looking beggar had been inquiring for them. Next morning at nine o'clock, as Amélie sat reading, she saw a ragged man with a tangled beard go up to the door. She was seized by a vague alarm, which

increased as he did not come out again, and she heard strange sounds of shuffling in her husband's room upstairs. After a long time her anxiety was relieved by Suard's entrance. He was calm in manner, but deadly pale. She asked him what their visitor demanded. "You once promised always to obey me and to trust me implicitly," he answered; "I now beg you to keep your word and to forgive me if I forbid you to go upstairs, or to question me about anything that is happening." She submitted. Towards nightfall she saw the stranger steal away and search in his pockets as he went. Suard lost no time in coming to her and assuaging her fears. The man, he told her, was M. de Condorcet, their friend of sixteen years' standing. He had been lodging with a widow in the country, and had been so absorbed in the book that he was writing that he had not stirred from the house for nine months. But there was a price upon his head; his abode had become known, and he was forced to quit it. His first thought had been the Suard. Weak with his long confinement indoors, and unused to walking, he had somehow made his way to Fontenai, to find them absent in Paris. Foodless and exhausted, he had lain in hiding till the morning. He begged Suard for shelter; the

tender husband would not endanger his wife's safety without consulting her, though he was sure of her consent. But his fears for her overcame his friendship, and after strengthening Condorcet with wine, he begged him to depart till it became dark, when he was to meet him and bring him back for the night. Meanwhile Suard undertook to get him a passport which would ensure his escape from France. He gave him a sum of money, some tobacco, without which Condorcet could not exist, and a Horace with which to pass the time; then bade him farewell till evening. Needless to say that Amélie was eager to forward her husband's plan. He went to Paris with great difficulty, procured a passport from Cabanis, and returned. He and his wife then sent the servants away, closed all the doors, prepared a sofa and plentiful food—and waited. On going upstairs, she was distressed and somewhat amused to find that the absent-minded philosopher had dropped his host's present of tobacco upon the floor, so that he must have passed hours of discomfort without it. She consoled herself with the thought that it would soon be restored to him. Still they waited, and still their guest did not appear. Their watch lasted all night, and when the morning broke, they hardly dared look in one

another's eyes for the fear that possessed them. It was too well founded. During the day, they heard of Condorcet's arrest.

Soon after he had left their house, he missed his tobacco, and, impelled by his craving for it, went into a tavern to buy some. Still prostrate from fatigue, he thought he would take advantage of this opportunity to get some dinner, and ordered an omelette. "How many eggs do you wish to be used?" inquired the landlord, who had been eyeing him suspiciously. The innocent Condorcet, who never knew what he put into his mouth, was at his wits' end; he reflected on the size of the ordinary omelette. "Twelve," he boldly replied. His fate was sealed; none but an aristocrat could be so ignorant or so extravagant. He was arrested, and his pockets were straightway examined. The Horace that was found there was a final proof, and he was led away to the prison from which he never emerged. Here it was that he was found dead by his gaoler, killed, as is supposed, by his own hand, in order to avoid the ignominy of the guillotine.

The Suards have been severely blamed for their conduct in this matter, and the fact remains that, had he stayed in their house, he might have escaped. But their part in the transaction has

been much misrepresented, and if it was not heroic, it must be also remembered that it was natural to put a wife before a friend. His death was a blow from which they took long to rally. They had loved him truly, and he deserved their love. "We become better in the presence of a good man," had been a saying of his which his life had done more than anything to prove.

This was in 1793. One July morning in 1794, Amélie observed a throng of people hastening forward along the road. On joining them, she saw another crowd coming in the opposite direction and waving their arms as they approached. "Robespierre is dead!" they cried, and the two multitudes embraced each other in silence. In Paris, the rejoicing was even more intense. One of the prisoners in the Temple got wind of the tyrant's execution. At eleven at night he whispered to the rest that he would tell them a great piece of news at twelve o'clock. He did not dare to do so before, for fear of the gaolers, who were not yet in bed. The assembly sat waiting motionless, without a word. As the great clock struck midnight, he said, "We are saved. Robespierre is no more!" The good news fell like a thunderbolt. Still speechless, their cheeks wet with tears, they all rose and

formed a solemn ring. Then they began to dance, and never stopped till exhaustion overcame them and they could dance no more.

The end of the Terror seemed almost like the beginning of the Golden Age, yet the fight was by no means finished. Paris was soon convulsed by the dissensions of the Jacobins amongst themselves; the Convention and the Extreme Left flew at each other's throats. Suard supported the Convention as the body most resembling a government. He was proscribed by the Extreme Party, and his house in Paris was sealed with the National Seal—that badge of confiscation. Fontenai underwent a like fate, owing to the treachery of his portress. He escaped—first to a friend at Cernai, where he found Madame d'Houdetot and Saint Lambert; then to François de Pange at Passy. His wife meanwhile paid a gallant visit to Paris, and, in spite of seals, contrived to regain some of their money and to keep his whereabouts a secret. She had the courage to pay him an impromptu visit at de Pange's, but she only dared stay for two hours.

A short-lived peace ensued and allowed them to meet again. They went together to Coppet, whither Necker had warmly invited them. He had lost his wife, and they found him much



changed by the sorrow he had undergone, but with all his energies still unimpaired. "What a beautiful age is seventy for writing!" he exclaimed to them—and he certainly bore out his precept in his practice.

They had settled down peacefully with him, when a fresh struggle began between the rival Councils which had now sprung up : the Directoire and the Council of the Ancients. The former won, and lost no time in issuing a long list of proscriptions. Amongst other names was that of Suard, who was out of France, and therefore safe. Necker pressed him to remain ; indeed, so fond was he of them both that he proposed they should always live with him. But he had generously made Coppet into a refuge for all who choose to flee thither, and the Directoire, getting wind of this, complained that he was harbouring suspected persons. At the same time, Madame de Staël wrote from Paris to warn her father of the danger and urge his guests to depart. Suard, too unselfish to expose his host for a moment, made up his mind to go at once. It was at great cost, for his wife could not possibly accompany him. At first his absence promised to be a short one, and, consoling themselves with this thought, they bade each other farewell. Suard bent his steps to

other parts of Switzerland, then to Germany. Amélie again took her courage in both hands, and resolved to go to Paris for her husband's sake, that she might rescue the remainder of their property. It had been placed under the care of a friend of theirs ; but when she reached her house, not only did she find that it was "under the Seal," but also that the friend had not had the presence of mind to remove their valuables before the arrival of the Directoire officials. She could get at nothing, nor had she any shelter. In this sore distress, she turned to Pauline de Beaumont, whose life, as we shall see, had been maimed and crushed by the Terror. She and her cousin, Louise de Pange (the wife of François), took the brave little Amélie into their house and set to work to help her. Happily, Pauline's great friend, the writer Joubert, was President of the "Section" in which the Suards had lived. They applied to him ; the Seal was immediately removed, and the valuables safely found and carried away with the help of Madame de Pange.

Suard, meanwhile, was making his way to Tübingen ; there many proscribed and congenial people had fled, and he stayed some time, in the company of M. de Narbonne, Madame Laval, and Camille Jordan. From the

first day of his absence, he and Amélie opened a correspondence which, in feeling and expression, might easily have been that of their courting-days. Now he thanks her extravagantly for her miniature, which, to his surprise, he found hidden in his "rabbit-skin glove," just as he was longing for her portrait ; now he uses his best endeavours to cheer and strengthen her mind, which was too often a prey to dark fancies. His injunctions were not wasted, for all through her ordeal she made persevering efforts after calm, and showed a touching resignation at his absence, which threatened to prolong itself indefinitely. She went to see Talleyrand and besought his influence ; he made many fair promises, which bore no fruit. At this juncture, the Directoire offered to all who had been exiled the island of Oléron for the use of themselves and their families. Here seemed a chance of reunion—and of pleasant reunion, as they would find most of their friends there. But Suard's noble reluctance to accept favour from a Government which he despised, made him reject this opportunity, and his wife had to submit to his decision. It is impossible not to suspect that the grand renunciation was more on her side than his, and that while he urged her to self-control, he was easily attaining that virtue

himself in German towns and the company of agreeable *émigrés*.

Their separation had lasted nearly three years. In 1799, she discovered that by pretending she had a legacy to claim in Frankfort, she could arrange to meet him there. She started in the coach, under the escort of a young officer of Marie Antoinette's bodyguard whose beauty had saved him from death. Her journey passed without adventure, and with unspeakable joy she found herself once more in the arms of the husband she loved so well. Their luck had indeed turned, for Suard was now allowed to re-establish one of his newspapers, and promptly set to work again. Clairon having given them good introductions to her friend, the Minister at Anspach (a popular centre for *émigrés*), they resolved to settle there, and did so for eight months.

The companions whom they joined here were all as poor as themselves and led their life in common—a life as touching in cheerful simplicity as it was in dignified effort. The women lived by embroidery which was sold in Germany. Like the men, they worked from seven in the morning till nine at night. Then they all met for relaxation, either at the house of the Minister's sister, or at the Bishop of Diez', sometimes also at the

Castle. The Suard soon became the ruling spirits of this society, and gave suppers twice a week: a fact not destitute of pathos. As usual, they made many warm friends, and when they eventually departed, they left their furniture to the *émigrés*.

This was in 1800, when Napoleon's Coup d'Etat once more turned the fate of France. The great Consul, who never lost time in detecting ability, at once recognised Suard's worth. No sooner had the latter returned to Paris, than he made him "Perpetual Secretary" to the *Académie*, with a high salary. Bonaparte interviewed him, and asked after the Academical Dictionary, then in process of creation. Suard replied that the work flagged, because time and men were wanting. "That is saying a great deal," rejoined Napoleon; "*Mén* I can imagine, but why *time*?" He promised to adopt the new Secretary's views, and the cautious Suard, by no means anxious for frequent contact with his chief, persuaded him to allow the institution of a council to be held twice a week, and to consist of five members, amongst whom were Morellet, Boufflers, and Suard himself.

The murder of the Duc d'Enghien, two years later, gave a great shock to his admiration for the Consul, now the Emperor of France. He

heard and shuddered at the cry of the mob, when the Bonaparte sisters had their carriage called at the theatre, and used their new titles for this purpose. "Princesses?" shouted the people. "Yes! princesses of the Enghien blood." In vain did Bonaparte try to convert him to his own view of the matter; he remained impregnable. Nor was he less firm about the unjust trial of General Moreau, who was unscrupulously accused of joining Cadoudal's plot against the Emperor. The latter again did his best to make Suard approve his course of action, and again produced no effect. It is a matter for wonder that the omnipotent Dictator, who never endured criticism without disgracing the critic, should have long left his Secretary unmolested. He even allowed him to hold his own in conversation, especially on one occasion, when he contradicted Bonaparte about Tacitus, before a vast European audience assembled in the Tuileries. Suard had been boldly defending the republican form of government. "I too desire a Republic," replied the Emperor, "but——" The blank was indeed too large to fill up. "We shall come nearer and nearer to each other, you and I," Napoleon graciously concluded; and though his prophecy was not fulfilled, and he afterwards suppressed

the *Publiciste*, Suard never suffered ignominy at his hands.

The Suard had resumed their salon, and it was at this period that Dr. Edgeworth and Maria visited them. But their company, for the most part, consisted of new guests, whose names lie beyond our present scope. That of Madame de Staël, however, still remains as one of the most prominent. "That contagious woman," as Napoleon called her, "who could not help making enemies," could still less help making friends. Her companionship became very necessary to Suard as he grew older. Of her books he had always been a staunch admirer, especially of her *Allemagne*, which fell in with his hopes of literary interchange between Germany and his own country. But he disapproved of her writings upon Kant, and regretted her waste of time over such obscure philosophy. "That of Bacon or Locke needs no one to explain it," he wrote; "it explains everything itself . . . but German philosophy rejects experience, and must therefore be rejected."

Towards the close of his life, his wish for her presence grew into longing. He recalled a former visit of hers: "Would she were in my study now!" he cried, at the very moment that

she lay dying at Geneva. Twelve days later, both of them had passed away.

But this was not till he was more than eighty years old. Meanwhile, he used his best energies to help others, especially young people; and passed the rest of his time agreeably between friends, books, and chess, of which game Madame Suard solemnly records her jealousy. He survived the Empire, and lived to receive the Order of Saint Michael from the hands of Louis XVIII.

He went on writing almost to the end. It is as a man and not as an author that we value him most; but his articles had a reputation in their day, and he published plenty of them, upon various themes; Addison, Lord Chesterfield, Madame de Sévigné, La Bruyère, La Rochefoucauld, Plato, and many others, were discussed by his pen. He also produced a remarkable volume upon Oliver Cromwell, in which the latter's tyranny was so forcibly denounced, that Napoleon's Censors thought they traced dangerous allusions to him there, and suppressed the book. It appeared later, but not until after the Emperor's fall.

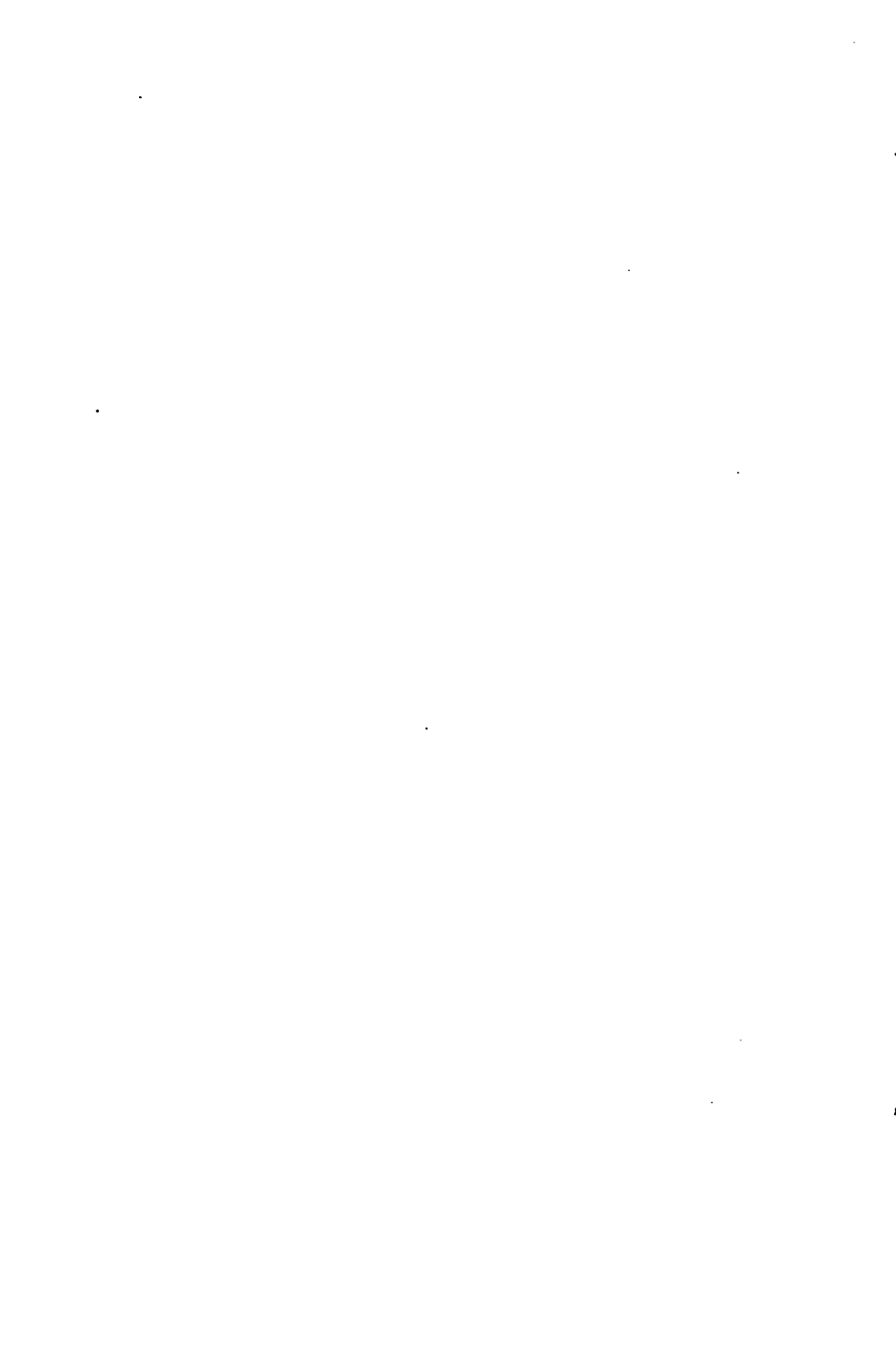
Suard did not only review other people; his last energies were devoted to his *Notes on his own Life*, a collection of disjointed reminiscences jotted down on stray scraps of paper left about



anywhere, and meant for the use of his wife. As he felt death approaching, his one thought was for her. He feared that grief might derange her reason, already jarred by the horrors of the Revolution; and to prevent this evil, he charged her to write his Memoirs from such material as he bequeathed to her. When, in 1817, the end came, she found her only consolation in this task, and strung his notes together with very honourable results. She lived for thirteen years longer, and only died in 1830, when she was about eighty-six.

“I have followed my inclination; I have enjoyed greatly; I have sacrificed nothing; for I could not aspire to the glory of genius—the only glory which could have tempted me.” So wrote Suard, shortly before his death, to his friend the Abbé Morellet. His words sum up his position both in life and in literature. Had he been second-rate, he might have achieved more. His career was also impeded by a certain want of creative force, for his character was finer than his brain. Almost the last survivors of the old society, he and his wife had managed to keep their heads and their hearts through all its glamour and confusion, and to welcome the new order with wide and loving spirits,

“The soul has no secret which conduct does not reveal,” he had once himself written. It was undeniably true about him and his Amélie. Their pure lives were a faithful mirror of their souls ; their only excesses were their noble enthusiasms, and they were as incapable of harbouring a small thought, as they were of committing a mean action. Their merits were greater than their fate ; they rest forgotten, yet they deserve to be remembered.



PAULINE DE BEAUMONT



## CHAPTER I

CHARLES LAMB somewhere confesses that the name of Michael Drayton has a finer relish to his ear than that of Shakespeare, because Drayton was his own discovery, and Shakespeare was not. We might almost say the same of Pauline de Beaumont, when we compare her to Madame Récamier, or any other famous lady of French society. There are so few who know her that to each of them she seems their own discovery, one might almost say their own love; for all who find her, love her. Hers is an intimate charm, as subtle and as unsuited to a big world as the fragrance of quickly-fading heliotrope; the charm also of a character of strong contrasts delicately interwoven—passion and calm; ardour and unbelief; tenderness and bitterness; serene playfulness and heart-searching tragedy. There is something appealing to interest in a woman whose favourite

books were Voltaire's *Letters*, the *History of Port Royal*, *Tristram Shandy*, and Plato's *Phædo*. She was, in fact, as complicated as she was simple. A young poet once presented her with a seal on which was engraved "A nothing agitates me, but nothing shakes me." She kept it as her motto, and it was always characteristic of her, whether before or after that terrible Revolution, which deprived her of almost every relation she had, destroyed her health, and for ever saddened her soul.

But it seems strange that so little should be heard of one who, in her short life of thirty-three years, was the confidante and critic of André Chénier and Madame de Staël; the adorer—and for some time adored—of Chateaubriand, whose *Génie du Christianisme* she, so to speak, produced; the friend, above all, of Joubert, that master craftsman of maxims and thoughts, first introduced to us by Matthew Arnold—that "Plato with the heart of La Fontaine," as Chateaubriand describes him—to whom she was the ruling feeling, the stimulus and the romance of life. When she died, his joy in existence flagged; and each October, the month of her illness and death, he kept sacred to her, spending it in retirement and in remembrance.

No less was this frail woman the centre of the knot of eminent men and charming women who gathered round her between 1798 and 1802 in her little salon of the Rue Neuve du Luxembourg, where, for the last two years, Chateaubriand reigned as king. They gave her the name of "The Swallow," and there must have been something swift and intangible about her, for Joubert, attempting to define her, writes of her as "the aerial soul." She is brought more vividly before our eyes, perhaps, by Chateaubriand's description which paints her at this period of her life, when she was about thirty years old.

"Madame de Beaumont's countenance was rather plain than pretty, and is the most faithfully given us in a portrait by Madame Lebrun. Her face was worn and pale; her eyes, shaped like almonds, would perhaps have sent forth too much brilliance, had not an extraordinary gentleness half veiled her glances, making them shine languidly, as a ray of light is softened in passing through crystal water. Her character had a kind of rigour and impatience, which arose from the force of her feelings and the internal illness from which she suffered. High of soul, great of courage, she was born for that world from which her spirit had withdrawn, both from choice and



from sorrow ; but when the voice of a friend called forth this solitary mind, it came and spoke to you words straight from heaven. The extreme weakness of Madame de Beaumont made her expression slow, and this slowness was touching."

It was this same "solitary mind" which so impressed itself upon her friends that they could never forget their need of her when death had taken her away. Four years after that event, in 1807, at one of Madame de Staël's parties at Coppet, M. de Sabran, a favourite guest of hers, started the subject of women's friendships for each other, and denied that they could be either deep, lasting, or disinterested. The conversation was cut short by Madame de Staël, who vehemently exclaimed, "Ever since I came into the world, I have admired and loved a most noble character. Never have I met one more generous, more grateful, or more passionately sensitive. It was a woman's. All my roots were bound up in her ; I should have made her my lifelong friend. I mean Pauline de Beaumont, the daughter of the unfortunate Montmorin, my father's faithful colleague."

It was indeed the position of Pauline's father, the Minister Montmorin, which both made and marred her life. The family of the Montmorins



PAULINE DE BEAUMONT

*From a portrait in the possession of the Joubert family*



was an old one, springing from the Saint Hérens. François de Montmorin, governor of Auvergne under Charles IX., wrote to that king to tell him that he could not believe the orders for Saint Bartholomew's Eve to be authentic ; and that if they were, he should still refuse to obey them, out of respect to His Majesty. Montmorin the Minister was a worthy descendant of his forebear, in nobility, if not in force of character. He was a fervent Royalist, but also a lover of constitutional methods, the great friend of Necker and of Lafayette (with whom he afterwards had differences), and also, for a time, when clouds were gathering but hope was still rife, the eager collaborator of the mighty Mirabeau in his schemes for a better monarchy. In earlier days, Montmorin was made *menin*, or tutor to the Dauphin, afterwards Louis XVI. Then followed his appointment as Spanish ambassador, and later as Minister for Foreign Affairs, which office he kept through days already troublous, until the year before the breaking-out of the Revolution. He was a highly-strung man, exceedingly diligent and painstaking, though his powers have been variously criticised.

M. Bardoux, the chief modern authority upon Madame de Beaumont and her family, judging

him by the light of history, writes of him with great admiration; whilst the aristocrat Bertrand de Moleville, speaking of him as a contemporary, dwells in his *Memoirs* upon the "extreme weakness of his character," and upon the fact of his playing into the hands of the Opposition, at the King's instigation. This, however, is perhaps no more than the natural verdict of the old-fashioned Monarchist upon the more parliamentary party in his own camp, for we find him praising the Minister's "justice and faculty for business," and his true devotion to the King; summing him up as "neither a Democrat, nor a Constitutionalist, but a real Royalist."

He had, at any rate, that considerable importance in his own time which belongs to men who are the able allies of greater men; beloved by a large circle of friends, he also possessed the gift of social success. This is not so evident till his daughter Pauline grew up. He had married a woman of no culture, but of robust will, who had the post of *Attendant* upon the aunts of Louis XVI. They had four children—two sons, Auguste and Calixte; and two daughters, Victoire—married early to M. de Luzerne, French ambassador in England—and Pauline, who was educated by her aunts and sent to two successive convents, the

last of them a "finishing" institution, whence she emerged in 1786, to be married at sixteen, without choice or affection, to the young Count François de Beaumont—a man "equally lacking in culture and taste," a singular mixture of coarseness, weakness, and violence. Not only was he incapable of understanding his wife, in whom refinement was a sixth sense, but he bitterly resented the qualities which he could not understand, and which made him feel that she saw through him—more especially, doubtless, her power of impatient irony, which experience had not yet softened. Life grew unbearable to both of them, and after a few months he went away to his parents, but presently returned to his home. It was then Pauline's turn to say she would go—that his grossness and density were not to be endured. In vain did her adoring but furious father threaten her with a *lettre de cachet*. She was too clever not to know that the fury would pass, but the adoration remain. A definite rupture took place between husband and wife in 1787, and they parted, never to live together again. He finally forsook her during the Terror in 1794, saved his own neck by much servility and strategy, without any attempt to rescue hers—married again after their divorce

in 1800, and survived her forty-eight years, only dying in 1851.

She, meanwhile, returned to her parents' roof, and the dread *cachet* was turned into the less ominous wafer with which she sealed her father's letters, for she became his secretary and also the hostess of his salon; a function which she was as well fitted as her mother was unfitted to perform. This year, 1787-88, was the happiest—the only calm one, perhaps—in her life. The Montmorins were rich enough for all the refinements they loved, though they would have been considered only moderately luxurious according to the standard then prevailing. They spent £2112 a year upon their table, £240 a year upon their wash; whilst Pauline's annual allowance for books and bookbinding amounted to £280. Perhaps nothing so humanises history as historical accounts, the practical being always the warmest side of life; and such details, especially the last item, make the whole household alive again with their rose-colour and fine linen, which (to Pauline at least) were incomplete without intellectual distinction and well-bound editions of the books on which she fed.

As for the distinction, she found it in the friends who made up her circle. Most people

have in youth an intellectual and social godfather, who forms their judgment and introduces them to life. Pauline found hers in her cousin François de Pange, who influenced her at this time more than anybody, although only five years her senior. In his maturity of thought, his clearness of soul and depth of knowledge, he recalls Arthur Hallam to our remembrance ; like him, too, he was doomed to die early and whilst he lived, to enjoy a considerable reputation amongst his fellows : for though he had not as yet achieved anything in literature, his career was the hope of many, who looked to his lofty reason and moderate views for the solution of political problems. "He never said anything that did not deserve to be written ; or wrote anything that did not deserve to be perfected," Roederer afterwards said of him. But he firmly refused to write for the public, even when Pauline pressed him to do so. It would be of no use, he replied, for "it is the mass of the people we ought to enlighten ; but then this mass is for ever agitating itself and never reads. We must calm it before enlightening it."

Madame de Beaumont's character of him, written after his death, analysed his nature for us ; perhaps, also, the reason he is forgotten.



"That man," she says, "who possesses one quality far beyond any other—who, for instance, is more courageous than the ordinary run of men, or more generous, or more human, but who has nothing else extraordinary—that man shines by his dominant quality, which the rest of his character gave one no reason to expect; but when everything is in harmony, when the qualities both of heart and brain are well ordered, so that their agreement regulates all the movements of mind and soul, one is no longer *struck* by this agreement, unless it be by its rarity; its effects do not astound, because they are foreseen."

Yet, notwithstanding his philosophy, François de Pange had a romantic heart. He gave its love to Louise de Sérilly, whom he married after the Revolution, and to whom he was faithful, even in all the glamour of his early intercourse with Pauline de Beaumont. But the latter was his *intellectual* idol, and became the confidante of his every aim and aspiration. If genius she had, it was a genius for discriminating the best, and for worshipping it when she had found it, both in books and men. Hers was the nature of the true critic, and de Pange gave it a wide scope by introducing her to his brilliant Paris world,

With his friends, the two Chénier brothers, André and Marie Joseph, she rapidly became intimate. She inspired André, the poet, with a devotion, half literary, half personal; he soon made her his counsellor, and confided into her hands all his manuscripts, from which she learned long bits by heart, with all the delight of one who loved poetry even more than poets. Later, she got him a post under her brother-in-law at the French Embassy in London, but at this period he was always in her company.

We have a glimpse of her appearing between François de Pange and André Chénier, at a party at Madame d'Albany's, where Beaumarchais was reading his "Mère Coupable." They criticised his play, and he was struck by their subtlety, more especially by that of the lady. He even admitted that their judgment was finer and more delicate than his own, though he did not think that they possessed so much taste as himself.

We find de Pange and Madame de Beaumont again, in another and yet more sparkling salon—that of Madame de Staël, the young Swedish ambassadress, still on the threshold of fame, but already longing for whirlwinds and slightly bored by the still small voice. Benjamin Constant—

whom Madame de Beaumont hated from the first—was already at the knees of Corinne; so was Guibert, who had been the flame of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse; so were a hundred others, amongst them many women; for the positive qualities of Madame de Staël had a masculine fascination and made lovers of her women friends. When Pauline de Beaumont appeared, her hostess felt an instinctive sympathy for her, which was more than reciprocated. Pauline, as impulsive as she was critical, lost her heart to her in eager admiration, which did not, however, blind her literary judgment. We find Madame de Staël not only loving her vehemently, but, no less than Chénier, constituting her her critic; confiding in her, depending on her, and also—perhaps too frequently—carrying her off in her own private chariot of fire into a vortex of social excitement, not always good for the frailer of the two women.

There were lesser lights than the comet-like ambassadress in Madame de Beaumont's circle. There was Suard, with his love of Englishmen, his judicial mind, his reviewer's pen and adoring wife; with him, too, came his other adorer, the pretty, mystic Madame de Krüdner, as much of a missionary as of an egotist, and as exalted as she was shallow, who "thanked and adored God

for having given her such a lover as Suard." Through her Madame de Beaumont learned to know Charles Edward's widow, Madame d'Albany, and her second husband, Alfieri, the silent Apollo—so silent indeed that none could discover if he were so, from wisdom or from stupidity. Here also were the gentle-mannered Condorcet, eloquent, high-souled, cold, Utopian : described by Mademoiselle de Lespinasse as " an enraged sheep and a volcano covered with snow " ; and the fiery little Economist, the Abbé Morellet, equally on the alert for celebrities, and for disputes about Free Trade and the Corn Laws ; not to speak of the stately Gouverneur Morris, who lived to describe the Revolution ; and the fashionable *raconteur*, Riouffe, who could boast the same experience, and whose book upon his prison life during the Terror afterwards became the rage amongst literary people.

A still more dominant, if not so well-known a figure, was that of the Abbé Louis, introduced to Montmorin by Talleyrand. Brilliant, intriguing, mysterious, this romantic financier shot across Pauline de Beaumont's life, to be, for a moment, the most important person there to her. They fell in love—the scandal-mongering journalist, Lepelletier, even hints at a closer connection between them ; but this, judging by

the rest of her life, we may assume to be untrue. Divided between his passion for her and his passion for his career, we see him now in her salon; now (as times grew ominous) bearing Marie Antoinette's diamonds secretly to Austria. He played Deacon to Talleyrand's Bishop at the First Federation, and disappeared in the general earthquake of the Revolution. We do not find him again crossing her path till 1802, when he was enjoying a safe neck and a comfortable little post as financier, under Napoleon. His scheming ambition, by no means spotless in the means it employed, had by then prevailed over all other feelings, and he shirked no brutality in gaining his ends. There is, perhaps, a touch of melancholy as well as sarcasm in Pauline's answer to somebody who asked if she had seen him. "Ah," she said quietly, "he has his fortune to make again!"

More solid was her intercourse with Rulhière, the young poet who made the motto for her which has already been quoted, and with the Trudaines, her old friends, a family important in their day, and as amusing, if not as effectual, as others of wider fame. M. de Trudaine was a keen supporter of Free Trade, a Commissioner of Works, and Montmorin's colleague—the friend

of Horace Walpole, Voltaire, and Madame du Deffand, and the pampered deity of the charming Duchesse de Choiseul. Madame de Trudaine—like the wives of many popular gentlemen—was a slightly fretful invalid, with no higher position than that of Salon Martyr, who complained with justice that she had taken ten years to form a choice circle, and that it only neglected her for her pains. Her presence on the sofa was ignored, and her room was even used when illness prevented her from appearing. She had, notwithstanding, the collector's enthusiasm. After much trouble she persuaded Rousseau to dine with her: her heart beat with triumph; but hardly had he sat down to table than he spied Morellet, whom he detested, and he vowed he would never set foot in her house again. Happily she had the consolation of two charming sons, one of them a poet and musician, both in the *Chambre des Enquêtes*, and both faithful knights of Pauline's.

We find these two, together with François de Pange, Riouffe, Morellet, Alfieri, the Chéniers, Madame de Pourrat, her daughters, Madame Lecoulteux (André Chénier's love) and Madame de Hocquart (the flame of Calixte de Montmorin, Pauline's youngest brother), also Pauline herself, Madame de Staël, and Madame d'Albany

—all met one evening in Suard's drawing-room. It was in the summer of 1789; the Tiers-État had just triumphed; all cultured Liberals were rejoicing, sure of a happy future, and the collected company, imbued with new ideas, were discussing the state of affairs. To them enters Condorcet, his manner calm, his intellect aglow; he talks of science and of progress with a golden tongue, with unbounded hope and unbounded faith in their possibilities, till, kindled by his own eloquence, he almost promises undying life upon earth. But Madame de Pourrat, woman-like, objects strongly, on the ground that eternal youth must then also be invented. "What!" asks Condorcet; "would you prefer the Resurrection, when old women must appear by the side of those taken in youth?" "As for me," replies sweet Madame Lecoulteux (not without some malice towards the dry bones of science), "I would rather trust to God's power of renewing our charms—if that be needful—than to all the experiments of chemistry." We have here the whole character of the educated Parisian world before the Revolution: full of high thoughts; believing all things because there was no central belief; ready to light its torches at any noble ideal, and trying to make science into a fire in-

stead of a light ; deeply read, but lacking contact with reality, and dreaming philosophical dreams for a populace of whom it knew nothing.

Yet the change, which to us who look back seems so sudden, was coming to them even then, and they did not recognise it for what it was. A few were more keen-sighted. Curiously enough, the only saying we know of Pauline's mother, Madame de Montmorin, is her verdict upon the first meeting of the States-General, at which she was present. Checking the enthusiasm of Madame de Staël, who was at her side, she said to her in grave tones, "You are wrong to rejoice, Madame ; great disasters will come from this both to France and to us." Yet there is no wonder that the facts were disguised, more especially from the eyes of youth. Reform was in good and apparently sober hands : even Mirabeau, to whom the word "sober" hardly applies, was concentrated upon popular representation and such ends as every good man must approve ; Lafayette, Montmorin, Necker in the background, all hated violence as much as they loved justice ; whilst even the Rolands, who had risen into prominence, seemed to combine ardour and moderation in no ordinary degree.

But there was little time left her for such calm



speculations, and even that short period of quiet before eternal parting was to be saddened for the Montmorins. The Minister had resigned in the early days of the still unrecognised Revolution, and had retired to the country to enjoy his family in peace while he awaited the return from the Ile de France of his eldest son, the sailor Auguste. But instead of the boy, came the news that he had been drowned on the voyage home. All that remained of him was a piece of Indian silk which he had brought to make a ball-dress for his sister Pauline. It reached her safely, with the sad irony of fate, and she resolved to keep it always by her, carefully put away, so that when her time came, she might be buried in it.

Not long after this, the pressure of affairs and his faithful devotion to the King called Montmorin to Paris, where he lived hidden in remote lodgings. Suspected of Royalist plots with Austria, it was not long before the Revolutionary officials sought him. He might never have been betrayed, had it not been for the affection of his landlady, who pertinaciously supplied him with chickens daily—and for the friendship of a certain Madame de Nanteuil, who visited him occasionally, her only notion of prudence being to leave her carriage at the street-corner. He was thus tracked and

arrested, though nothing more inculpatory was found amongst his papers than a phial of opium, kept by him in case of domiciliary visits. It was not possible to condemn him at his first trial, but unfortunately he had quarrelled both with Brissot (the Girondin journalist) and with Camille Desmoulins. This sealed his fate. From his second trial in the Place de la Révolution, he was sent nominally back to prison—in reality to be cut in pieces by the horrible pikes of September 2nd, 1792.

The news reached his family at the Château de Passy-sur-Yonne in Burgundy, whither he had exhorted them to flee. They were not long in following him. The same officials who were sent from Paris, that winter, to arrest the ex-Minister, Loménie de Brienne (only to find him dead in his bed, killed by his own hand), came on to the house where the Montmorins were staying, and made prisoners of them all, even of Madame de Luzerne, the elder sister, who was guilty of nothing worse than receiving ordinary letters from her husband in London; when her bureau was searched, it was found to contain a collection of rusty nails, and rings covered with verdigris, the pendant to her father's phial of opium. Pauline was the only person the officials rejected,

on account of her delicate health, which they feared would give them trouble on the journey to Paris; but upon her entreaties to accompany her family, they relented and put her with them into a tumbril. Before long, however, she showed symptoms of fainting, and, repenting of their indulgence, they set her down without further ado in the snow-covered road and went their way. Somehow, by what means she never knew, she managed to drag herself painfully along, till she reached a peasant's hut near Theil, the next village to Passy-sur-Yonne. Its inhabitants, Dominique Paquereau and his wife, took her in—and it was in this straitened refuge that she stayed for months, too ill and exhausted to do more than drag herself from bed to hearth and from hearth to bed, day after day. Her body she nourished upon the money she got from selling a few jewels she had with her, and her mind upon two or three books which she had characteristically contrived to save, in the emergency of sudden flight. These were her one consolation, and never did she need it more sorely. For it was here, in the squalid hut, that her sorrows broke upon her, one after another. Her sister had arrived in Paris in high fever, and had only escaped butchery by dying in the prison-hospital; her mother and her

brother Calixte had gone to the scaffold with Madame Elisabeth. Nineteen times, as the guillotine fell, did the boy Calixte cry out "Vive le Roi!" At the twentieth, he looked up: his voice died in his throat—it was his mother who stood on the scaffold. He followed her immediately, kissing a piece of blue ribbon—the sash of his lady-love, Madame de Hocquart—with all the passion of his eighteen years. The Chéniers, the Trudaine brothers, Malesherbes, also Pauline's friend, shared the same fate. The only relations that were left to her, when the tide of blood had swept by, were her brother-in-law and her nieces, the de Luzernes, and François de Pange; the only friends, Louise de Sérilly (soon to be Madame de Pange), Madame de Hocquart, and Madame de Staël, who had fled to Coppet. Job-like, Madame de Beaumont sat and waited—never in vain—for fresh woe. But, unlike Job, she could not still bless God with her lips. The pious faith in which she had been brought up, accepting it hitherto without question, now deserted her. There seemed no good, no comfort anywhere: nothing but devilry outside herself and prostration within. It was in this state that Joubert found her at the door of the cottage, one day in the summer of 1794.

## CHAPTER II

**I**T may not be out of place to pause for a little and contemplate the character of Joseph Joubert, who was destined to have so great an influence upon Pauline de Beaumont. Some men are best portrayed by an account of their circumstances and of the things that happen to them—some by the picture of their inner selves and their relationships to books and people. Such was Joubert, “in his time,” says Sainte-Beuve, “the most delicate and original type of that class of good folk which the old society alone produced: spectators, listeners, without ambition, without envy, curious, unoccupied, attentive, disinterested about everything, interested by everything, the true *amateurs* of beautiful things.” He was also a Benvenuto Cellini of thought: no great sculptor, but a carver of gems, creating his maxims and reflections with infinite care and fancy.

Nobody, perhaps, who has written so little has been so much written about by the few who make up the inner circle of literary men ; nobody has been better loved by them. Chateaubriand, Fontanes (the classical poet and reviewer), Sainte-Beuve, Matthew Arnold, M. Paul Raynal, and others of less repute, have all described him—and not one has left a word that is not praise. To his contemporaries his work was one with his personality, for his private Journals of Thoughts and Maxims were the flower of his daily philosophy. He was essentially the king of friends ; he was as essentially the true critic—the interpreter—who has the poet in him, and knows first of all how to appreciate. Joubert was the critic, the interpreter of life, with insight so vivid as to seem almost like creative imagination. It was the same quality which made of him both friend and critic. When he judged a book or an idea, he passed into it, taking it from its own point of view ; and when he came into close relationship with human beings, he passed into *them*, leading their lives with them and insisting upon a minute knowledge of their daily existence—their walks, their diet, their books, their friends, their conversation.

Yet his heart was rather ardent than passion-

ate ; tender as a woman's ; wide as a man's ; gay as a child's. Basking in hospitality and good company, he contrived to combine simplicity with fastidiousness ; glowing indulgence and gracious playfulness with a certain austerity of mind : the result, not of asceticism, but of the pursuit of truth and beauty which dominated his tastes and existence, and made him reject all the furbelows of life and of speech. Superfluous words he detested. "If ever there was a man," he wrote, "tormented by the accursed ambition to put a whole book into one page, a whole page into one sentence, and this sentence into one word, that man is myself." Glibness he disliked even more ; want of harmony or irritation of mind perhaps most of all, and confessed that he had a "shivery soul which needed soft, sunny weather." "Wear velvet inside you," he says, "and try to give pleasure at every hour of your life."

Those who to-day seek sweetness and light are apt either to sink with despondency, or to put up barriers between themselves and their kind ; Joubert, on the contrary, set out early on the quest, and, finding what he sought,—though in few places,—gave thanks for his happiness, and allowed it to bind him more closely to his fellows.

He never kept his discoveries for himself; the sunlight of his wit played half tenderly, half keenly, on everything it touched, making the rare seem obvious, and the obvious rare. "I should like," he writes, "to make the sense of the exquisite pass into common sense, or else make the sense of the exquisite common. . . . Oh, how difficult it is to be at once ingenious and sensible!"

So ethereal a mind was bound to be wrapped in a frail body. A lady once said of him: "A soul accidentally met a body and did its best with it: that made Joubert." Bad health had to be a prominent feature in his life. It gave him an intuitive knowledge—perhaps rather over-anxious and over-scientific—of the sufferings of others. More than this, he gleaned amusement from it. Even when he could hardly sit up in bed, in his customary "pink silk spencer," or was obliged to lie for hours with his eyes shut, in order to recover his strength, he contrived to make countless little jokes on his régime and his elaborate precautions. So did his friends, who enjoyed the tinge of paradox these manœuvres gave to his harmonious character. Chateaubriand describes him, half lovingly, half quizzingly, in a sketch written later, but applicable to all times.



He had (we hear) an "extraordinary hold upon the mind and upon the heart, and when once he had captured you, his image was there like a fact, like an obsession which you could not chase away. He laid claim, above all, to calm, and nobody was so agitated as he; he watched himself to stop these emotions of the soul, which he considered injurious to his health, but his friends were for ever coming and disturbing the precautions he had taken to be well, for he could not help being moved by their sadness or their joy; he was an egoist who only busied himself about others. . . . He changed his diet and his régime at every instant, living one day upon milk, another day upon minced meat—now having himself jolted at a quick trot on the roughest roads—now dragged at the slowest pace in the smoothest byways."

Of outward history there is little to relate. Born in 1754, at Montignac in Périgord, the first part of his life was inspired by his adoration for his mother, a noble-minded woman who saw and evoked the best possibilities in her son. At fourteen years old, he was sent to be educated by the Fathers of the Christian Doctrine, who soon learned to love him and to foster his taste for classics. With them he remained, without

taking any vows, half as pupil, half as teacher, till the age of twenty, when he went home for two years to rest from his studies and to revel in family affection. It was there, in 1774, that he began that private Journal of Thoughts which he continued till he died, without any idea of the pleasure it would one day give to a reading public : some of his intimate friends even being ignorant of its existence. From Montignac, in 1776, he went to Paris to pursue learning, to see life, and, like everyone else, to choose that small world in the big one which best suited his nature. It was naturally the world of talk in which he settled. "To converse and to know" was his motto as well as Plato's, and his amiable manners no less than his distinguished intellect soon gained access for him to the society of Marmontel, La Harpe, d'Alembert, and, above all, Diderot, whose "most hospitable of minds" immediately acquired a strong influence over him. He has been called Diderot's "purified pupil"; and indeed it is strange to find Joubert, who was "finally both a Platonist and a Christian in love with ideal beauty and holiness," at this moment under the Encyclopædist's sceptre. Its sway passed before long, but its influence, we are told, may be traced in the sympathy he always had for new ideas; whilst

in later days, when his judgment was ripe, he still kept his old admiration, and maintained that Diderot had "more follies of style than follies of thought."

In 1790 he was elected as *Juge-de-paix* in Montignac, and returned for good to his native country. He had not entirely deserted it all this time : we find him visiting an old Périgord relative in 1788 at Villeneuve-sur-Yonne, and there meeting a charming traveller, a young lady from Lyons, who was just passing through the town with her mother and her old guardian, the Baron de Juys. Then and there Joubert decided that she was *the* wife he had dreamed of for his great friend Fontanes, the struggling poet. There was no time to arrange matters at that instant, as she and her companions left Villeneuve at once, all of them enchanted by the conspirator's company. But his "luminous thought" could manage love by correspondence : he contrived that Fontanes should go and see the lady on her way through Paris, and, after learning that her impression of him was favourable, he proceeded to write such charming and constant letters to her family (more especially to her guardian), describing the young man in such glowing and attractive colours, and dwelling so strongly upon his brilliant prospects, that all of

them, even the crusty old Baron, were taken by storm. They capitulated, and the marriage took place. Fontanes did not know of the correspondence till long afterwards, but when he did, he was deeply moved, and declared that "Plato, writing to bring about the marriage of a disciple, could not have found language more beautiful and persuasive."

Joubert was not long before he followed his friend's example in finding a wife at Villeneuve. His marriage was characteristically rather founded on sympathy than love. He had long known a certain Mademoiselle Moreau-de-Bussy, now no longer in her first youth, who lived with her old mother and educated a niece. She was an excellent housekeeper, a good comrade, the queen of a sick-room; rather brisk in manner, but warm-hearted and full of common sense, though the sense of the exquisite had not transformed it, and she had no literary tastes. Joubert had always identified himself with her matter-of-fact existence both in joy and in sadness, and when her much-loved brother died, he crowned his powers of consolation by marrying her. They settled in Villeneuve, and soon added his younger brother Arnaud (married to her niece) to their household. Then a little son appeared, fervently

desired and loved by his father, who makes this entry in his Journal at the child's birth: "I said to myself, 'Rejoice!' I stayed at home, or strolled in the little garden, so that I might withdraw myself into my happiness." But the boy, charming in his childhood and of considerable gifts, was idle and ineffectual, and proved the one disappointment in Joubert's life.

Meanwhile, ignorant of the future, he delighted in the sweetness of his childhood, and lived quietly and happily amidst an ever-increasing circle of friends who came from Paris, one after the other, to stay with him. He was made to be the centre of such a *côterie*. "One must," he says, "always have an empty and open corner in one's head, so that one may make room for the opinions of one's friends and lodge them there in passing. It becomes really unbearable to converse with men whose heads only contain houses where every corner is full, and nothing from the outside can enter. Let us have hospitable hearts and minds."

His friends were eager enough that his hospitality should not stop at themselves; they were always clamouring that he should write a book. Fontanes especially left him no peace, and entreated him to write down his thoughts every

evening and make them into a connected whole. It was of no use : Joubert was "as little of an author as possible" ; his aims were modest : he wished for "luminous thoughts, not brilliant ones" ; besides, he had his own convictions about himself. "Heaven," he wrote, "has put nothing into my intelligence but rays of light, and instead of eloquence, he has merely given me beautiful words. I have only strength to lift *myself*, and my one virtue is a certain incorruptibility." And again : "I can only do good work slowly and with extreme fatigue. Behind many people's strength there is weakness. Behind my weakness there is strength ; the weakness is in the instrument."

This was the soul, half ancient, half modern,—this devout Athenian with the frail "instrument" and overmastering heart—who, at the age of forty, found his romance suddenly one summer's day at the door of the peasant Paquereau's cottage. His meeting with Pauline de Beaumont was the epoch of an uneventful life : the burst of sunshine on a soft grey day, such as early spring often brings us. From the moment that he saw her, he conceived for her a passion—the passion of friendship, not of love ; whilst she as quickly discovered in him the confidant, the critic, the exciting companion, the restful friend, more necessary to her tempera-

ment than the emotional experiences which later years were to reveal to her. They were, in fact, made for each other. It is common to affirm that the most successful friendships are formed by opposite characters; it would often seem truer that those are best suited to one another who have the same qualities in inverted proportions, pursuing their ideals in common. This was the case with Joubert and Pauline de Beaumont. They were, each of them, both critical and ardent to an uncommon degree; with him the criticism came first; with her the fervour ran before the keen judgment and satisfied his demand for "enthusiasm but not explosion." Both sought calm — but his storms came from without, hers from within: his nature rarely experienced them, shrinking from such exposure; whereas her tempest-tossed soul knew only occasional breaks of blue sky. Whilst self-empire was equally the standard of both, he spontaneously ruled his spirit in spite of anxieties and disturbance; she, on the other hand, seemed ever to be struggling with agitation. Her heroism often led to the same conclusions about the endurance of life as his good sense; and where he gave wisdom, she supplied will. Both cared for distinction of mind, and, above all else, for the search after beauty

rather than effectiveness ; both had the power of austerity and a tendency to irony, which in her became sarcasm, in him delicate malice ; both—especially Joubert—were nevertheless optimists about their friends ; both cared for the same books in the same way, obliging each to read with the other's eyes ; both had the same humour, the same impersonal interest in things outside themselves ; and finally, the same insight, which enabled each to perceive at once what the other was.

When Joubert had found her, he lost no time in entreating her to be his guest, but she said she must be faithful to her peasants and remained with them. His first visit was followed by others, more and more frequent, until they became daily. He brought her books and they discussed them ; they learned each other's histories ; they talked of life ; when they could not see one another, they corresponded. The seals which she used for her letters mark the two periods of her life. All the first ones bear the impression of an oak, with her motto, "A nothing agitates me, but nothing shakes me." The later ones, after she knew Chateaubriand, have an Egyptian seal with an Arabian device : "His power can neither diminish nor disappear ;" but



whether the power referred to was that of God or love, was never explained.

She seems at last to have yielded to her new friend's representations of the growing danger of arrest at Passy, and to have gone, for awhile, to stay with the Jouberts at Villeneuve. Her sufferings appealed to the maternal housewife there, and Madame Joubert adopted her with a friendship almost as warm and quite as enduring as her husband's. But Pauline evidently returned after a time to the Paquereaus' cottage, for the first letter we have of hers is dated from there, in December 1794, when Robespierre's death had determined her to venture to Paris and see if she could recover any of her property. "I go," she writes, "sad at not saying good-bye to you, my heart heavy at leaving my cottage, and frightened at again seeing that town, now dyed with the blood of those who were dearest in the world to me. Yet I am going to see my friends again also. I wish only to fill myself with this idea, but all the others come and overpower me."

Her fears were realised. Paris seemed a city of the dead; nothing remained of her old home but a cypress she had planted at fourteen years old, now a symbol to her of her sorrow. After a little she found her cousin François, also his wife

Louise, who had only escaped death because she was expecting a child, and a reprieve had been granted to her. The agents of the Public Accuser drew up, in their horrible haste, a mistaken statement of her execution, and she remained safe in her prison, till the death of Robespierre released her. In 1795, when summoned to bear witness against Fouquier-Tinville at his trial, she was able to show the judges the *Acte de Décès* which had saved her. "She seemed," a contemporary tells us, "like an apparition from the other world, coming to bear witness, in the name of the victims, against the Public Accuser and the Judge, who now sat, in their turn, on the bench of the Accused." Her property at Passy, not very far from Villeneuve, was now restored to her, and she retired there with François de Pange and Madame de Beaumont, to whom she offered shelter till the latter should regain the Montmorins' estate at Theil.

Louise de Pange was a staunch friend, and Pauline, who called her "Ma chère Grande," was warmly attached to her. We soon find her introducing the de Panges to Joubert, but François was too stern for him.

"It is very useful to me to see M. de Pange," he writes; "even his laugh is deep. When I

return from a visit to him, I like to think of all that he said to me; but when I go to see him, I feel much more eager to hear him than to talk to him. . . . With him, my fancy feels slightly constrained . . . with you, it is more at ease. He wishes one to walk, and *I* like to fly, or, at any rate, to flutter."

The object of this criticism had not long either to walk or to fly. Soon after this, mortal illness seized upon a constitution already impaired by imprisonment during the Revolution. "I *must* not die," he said. "I know that I was not born to leave nothing behind me,"—yet death took him pitilessly in the prime of his life. This fresh sorrow opened Pauline's old wounds. She stayed on with his widow, in a bitter, discontented mood, neglecting her health, and suffering both in body and spirit.

Joubert had the courage of the critic, in morals as well as in literature, nor did he spare even her. "It is not Desprez who has slandered you to me, Madam," he writes; "it is yourself. I am very glad to tell you that I shall never admire you comfortably, or esteem you as much as I wish, till I have seen in you the finest courage of all—the courage to be happy. To gain it, you must first have the courage to take care of your-

self, the wish to be well, and the will to recover. I shall not believe you capable of it till you have lost your pretty fancy of dying at post-haste in some wayside inn."

She was, however, slowly returning to life through her Villeneuve friends. Presently another reviving, almost galvanic force came to break her quiet, in the shape of Madame de Staël, whose name reappears in her *Annals* about this time. It is mentioned in a letter to Joubert, dated May 1796 (soon after the death of Madame Necker, Madame de Staël's mother), and written from Paris, where Pauline was again staying.

"How can I have been so long writing to you, I who so much love to receive your letters? Without explaining this phenomenon, I will only tell you that at post-time I say to myself: 'If I had written, I should hope for a letter,' and I curse my laziness. I do not send you Madame de Staël's book by my cousin, because your brother told me you had read it. I swear to you that it is wholly herself; its beauty and its faults both belong to her. Her father is too furious at her getting into print to help her; he is absorbed in his grief; I saw a letter from him on the death of his wife, which showed a deep sensibility, and expresses never-ending sorrow. Yet his health

is good. You must never believe the public ; its news are not so good as mine, for I get them from his daughter. I was much touched at seeing her again after more than two years' absence and centuries of misery. Even if she were not as remarkable in mind as she is, one would still have to adore her for her kindness, for her soul—so high, so noble, so capable of all that is great and generous. She is what Madame Roland believed herself to be, but she does not dream of getting glory from it ; she believes all the world to be as good and generous as herself. How lovable is this simplicity, and how much it adds to her virtue ! The pride of Madame Roland almost makes me unjust ; I have perpetually to remind myself that she perished by the sword in order to pardon her—and, in spite of her death, she will never be anything to me but the Providence of August 10th.<sup>1</sup> She has recalled to me intrigues which roused great resentment in me. Yet I hope that I do justice to her character, and I am sure I feel all the beauty of her death."

It was perhaps natural that the critical, many-sided Madame de Beaumont should not feel

<sup>1</sup> At this date the Girordins desired only the abdication of the King ; later, nearly all of them voted for his death.

attracted by the ambitious and fanatical nature of Philpon Roland, especially after the tragedies to which the Girondins' zeal had led. She shows her distaste for the effects of the Revolution again at the end of this letter, where she criticises Riouffe, whose *Memoirs d'un Détenu* had just appeared, and were much in vogue. After condemning his comparison of Robespierre to Christ, she grows enthusiastic about his spontaneity and sensibility compared with the dryness of the rest of the world, who hardly inquire about his sufferings during the Terror. It is the same, she says, with her cousin, Louise de Pange, whose friends never ask her for any details about her imprisonment, though they tell her, at great length, the smallest details of some common theft or arrest.

In the next year (1797), she went to her family's estate at Theil, near Passy, though it seems to have actually belonged to her nieces. Her renewed intercourse with her beloved "Delphine" soon again absorbed her; it had restored to her the power of excitement in life. "Madame de Staël is starting for Switzerland, and gives me rendezvous on the road, either at Sens or Villeneuve—I think Sens. As soon as I get the works of her mother and

the Memoirs that are promised to me, you shall have them." Joubert replies with an eager entreaty that his "green room" may be the place of meeting instead of Sens. But the Muse, like all Immortals, was made for eternity rather than time, and could not be relied on for punctuality.

"If only," Pauline resumes, "Madame de Staël does not keep me waiting for her arrival: she says she shall come in a week or ten days, reckoning from the 24th of Vendémaire . . . still I am not without fears. No, certainly, I shall not allow that Whirlwind to enter your peaceful green room; you would *have* to see her, even if you had the courage to resist the temptation. She has already heard me speak of you; I should be obliged to speak still more of you, and in spite of every wish to ensure your quiet, I could not do this in a way that would extinguish her insatiable curiosity. You would be attracted—disturbed—and that peaceful green room would no longer be a chamber of retirement. 'The Crown,' or 'The Red Hat' shall be the place for the interview."

Joubert was at this time a great admirer of Madame de Staël's works: "Of all the women who have published," he said, "I like only her and Madame de Sévigné." *Corinne* altered his opinion; he accused its author of creating a

"deformed novel, where the passions were represented as the most beautiful thing in life." Nor was it only literary disapproval that he learned to feel for her. He thought that she drew Pauline too frequently to Paris, and made her live in a whirl, harmful alike for her mind and body. It had indeed made solitude unendurable to her : "I have resumed my solitude in a temper," she writes ; " I occupy myself with disgust, I walk without pleasure, I dream without charm, and I cannot find one comforting idea. I know this state cannot last long, but youth passes, resources wear out, and only regrets remain. . . . I am sure from this letter you will accuse me of at least reading Young's *Night Thoughts*. Oh dear, no ! I'm reading *Tristram Shandy*—you see with what fruits."

To this elegy Joubert replies with a side-hit at Madame de Staël :

"I recommend you to all the saints of both sexes at Theil," he says, "to its cavern of verdure, to its lakes of air and clearness, and to that river of light which flows from the direction of Sens. I am furious with those whose company has given you a disgust for solitude, and if they compliment themselves upon it, *I* abuse them for it. But why do you go and live with these restless spirits ?



Instead of a head they have a whirlwind, which runs after every cloud. They wish to bridle the winds, and end by merely being their sport. Their whirl has spoiled you—but you will reform. I think nothing in the world is more hostile to happiness, as well as to wisdom, than the passions of the mind, if one feels them every hour. Those of the blood are more sensible. Is there anything clumsier and more teasing than to harbour and nourish at every moment of the day desires without possibility of possession, and voracity without a prey? Try to get peace in love, in esteem, in veneration, I implore you!”

She evidently tried for awhile to appease him by taking care of her health ; for the day after this scolding, he writes that her “diet gives him infinite pleasure—even to think of”; but Theil was not near enough to Villeneuve for her to see him much, and the dulness of the country soon drove her to seek distraction in Paris. She was there for the short revival of the Revolution and the alarming proscription of the 18th of Fructidor, 1797. All her friends were once more in jeopardy ; her own arrest was probable at any moment.

Yet it was not her danger that absorbed her, but a very different affair. According to her

custom when in town, she had been almost living with Madame de Staël, but this time, her visit had brought her disenchantment. Their intercourse had been marred by the continual presence of Benjamin Constant, who had become "Delphine's" ruling deity. His relations with and influence over her disgusted Pauline, who was perhaps more moved by personal aversion than by severe moral considerations. Nor was the author of *Adolphe* undeserving of her hatred. At the same time orator, Liberal politician, Don Juan, "historian of religion, pontiff, and scoffer," adored by the brilliant Paris world, he describes himself at twenty-five as "*blasé* of everything, bored with everything, bitter, egotistical, with a kind of sensibility which only seems to torment me; so changeable as to pass for a fool, subject to fits of melancholy which interrupt all my plans." Essentially the Byronic hero down-at-heels, he was, so to speak, the *décadent* of a Romantic school, worse than the *décadent* of the Materialists, who have no poetic ideal to defame. Incapable of action, he analysed to death the last fraction of his heart, and was able to write during the last agony of his best friend, Madame Talma: "I pass the day and night by the bedside of Madame Talma, who is near her end; I am

studying death there." Or, again, to Madame de Staël, on the loss of her father: "At this moment I am sad, but if I wished, I could be, not consoled perhaps, but so far distracted from my trouble that it would not exist."

This was the man who had power to separate the two friends, and obtained complete ascendancy over Madame de Staël, until his second marriage with a second German lady, whom he disliked as soon as he was tied to her. He did not dare tell his old love of the wedding until after the event, when he rushed post-haste to Coppet and introduced his wife to her at an inn. This was his first intimation that he had had enough of her. "I am tired of that man-woman whose iron hand has enchained me these ten years," he writes at this time (1807). "I regret her and I hate her."

Pauline de Beaumont did not spare him. If she had a feeling, it was necessary to her to express it. The day after the 18th of Fructidor, when she was expecting her exile from hour to hour, she had an interview with him, and thus describes it to Joubert: "All the world is in a panic, preparing to pack up, bowed beneath the yoke of banishment, as formerly beneath the yoke of the guillotine. I await my fate with firmness enough, perhaps only because

I think myself invulnerable, from having once escaped a fate which seemed inevitable. Yet I have no illusions; I am pretty well prepared for all journeys, and that from which no man returns is not the one I should make with the least pleasure. I do not know whether it is a way to calm you, if I assure you that Benjamin Constant is as much hated as possible, in spite of his success in the constitutional circle. He cannot succeed even in loving himself. As far as that goes, he is not happy. But that only proves his powerlessness to enjoy. In spite of my ominous circumstances, I had a pleasant scene with him, confessing quite frankly to him my hatred for his person and opinions, and my contempt for his methods."

Joubert fully shared her dislike: "Whoever abuses Benjamin Constant," he had written some months earlier, "seems to me to undertake a troublesome piece of work, which is my business; I feel relieved in proportion. . . . That man is to me like 'a flat violin squeaking under the bow.' All that he says wounds my spirit. . . . there is nothing more unbearable and revolting than insincerity in error," (by which he means the mistakes that come from the heart, and not from some blunder of the mind). Perhaps he makes

his worst accusation when, rather later, he writes : " Benjamin Constant is the only thing in the world that does not amuse me. " He could show no more scathing sign of his distaste.

Joubert was glad of anything, even disenchantment, which would disgust his friend with Paris and bring her back to Theil. At first she was there alone. Shortly before this, her companion Louise de Pange had married, for the third time, a certain Marquis de Montesquiou Fézensac, and had set up a separate household. Pauline's solitude seemed to suit her ; she was enjoying an interval of calm, even of health. " To be happy and make others happy," Joubert had written to her, " you have only to let nature act and consent to be yourself." She was at last following this advice. Her breach with Madame de Staël was not preying upon her, perhaps because she was buoyed up by hopes of her own influence on that lady ; the peace, the sweet air, the leisure for reading, soothed and helped her, though a fit of boredom was sometimes inevitable. Intercourse with Joubert now sufficed her. Occasionally they paid each other visits. Her room has been swept, he writes, three times, and is at last worthy to receive her and her *migraine* ; or he wants her to come to the vintage ;

or dwells upon reminiscences of her last stay ; and describes how his boy will not believe him when he shows him the picture of a fox, because she had told him it was a pole-cat. But their companionship was generally carried on by post, and formed the one excitement in her day. "If I had someone to endow," she wrote at New Year 1798, "I would give him your mind, your character, your wife, and your whole household."

Their common reading, whether together or apart, was a bond between them. Early in the day, Joubert had undertaken to be her literary director, and he was an imperious one. His agitation, when she read what he disapproved, seems almost a whim, but, like other whims, it was founded on his consistent fastidiousness and affection ; he could not bear that those he loved should read the wrong things or like the right things in the wrong way. She was a great reader of Voltaire, for whom Joubert had no liking. "God keep me from ever possessing a complete Voltaire!" he responds to Pauline's offer of an edition she possessed ; and in his *Thoughts* he exclaims : "I can well fancy Bossuet, Fénelon, Plato carrying their works before God ; even Pascal and La Bruyère, or Vauvenargues and La Fontaine, for their

works paint their souls, and can be reckoned to their account in heaven. But it seems to me that Jean Jacques Rousseau and Montesquieu would not have dared to present their books; they have only put into them their wit, their temper, and their efforts. As for Voltaire, his works also paint him, and will be reckoned to his account, I believe, but at his own expense."

But his *Letters* inspired Joubert with unalloyed admiration, and he made an unexpected exception.

"I do not know," Pauline writes from Theil in April 1798, "if it was you who advised me to read Voltaire's correspondence. I hope it was, because reading it has given me extraordinary pleasure. I own that one must have great leisure to find charm in it; but then it takes the place of society, and of a sprightly, animated, witty society. Voltaire was a very good man for a long time; he frequently is one still in his old age. It is he, it is the remembrance of you, it is Tasso, at whom I'm hacking in Italian, who prevent me from becoming a heavy pedant. Best of thanks to you all three."

He speedily replies to this: "Certainly it *was* I who advised you to read Voltaire's letters.

In that, I had the merit of divining your taste. I pique myself upon having this talent, and it torments me, for I am certain that your mind is not yet occupied by the subjects fittest to give it ravishing enjoyment, and I am impatient to see in your possession the works best calculated to produce this effect ; this makes me extremely busy. If God would give me life, and place within my sight the lucky chances that I pray for, I should only need three weeks to collect all the books I think worthy to be placed, not in your library, but in your alcove—and if I succeed in getting them, I shall feel as if I had nothing more to do in this world.”

It is easy to understand that Voltaire should have pleased the sceptical side of Madame de Beaumont's nature : the side of her which had, as we know, dominated her beliefs since the Revolution. It is interesting to discover that, whatever her creed, she was always more deeply attracted to the devout and austere aspects of life. “It seems to me,” she said, “that in a Christian I should like the mind to be a Jansenist and the heart a little of a Molinist.” Her “Molinist” tastes she attributes to old associations—for her aunt had favoured the Jesuits ; but her Jansenism was born in her.



She seems, even in early days, to have given an impression of piety; her mother's old maid, writing to her at this time, tearfully begs her to regain belief, because she, of all others, possessed every quality for the saint's vocation. And these pious instincts remained. Even in her most sceptical moments, she seems to have had "a taste for Christianity," and for all that was severe and controlled in religion—somewhat to the annoyance of Joubert, who found such food too dry for his radiant Catholic philosophy, and did not perhaps feel the need of so stern a rule for moral guidance. The Jansenists, he averred, seemed to love God without love, and only out of duty. But his distaste did not check her liking for them. In the midst of her enjoyment of Voltaire, she is writing to him that what at that moment interests, occupies, and astonishes her, is a history of Port Royal, whose author seems as angry with Voltaire for being brought up by Jesuits, as for being Voltaire. "Do you know," she says, "that if Port Royal still existed, I should run the risk of rushing off there? Luckily my fervour is calming down. I am going to read *Les Provinciales* as soon as I have finished my three volumes."

No Port Royal being at hand for her, she had

to satisfy herself with books. Her religious sense made her quick in the detection of its counterfeit. "The devoutness of La Harpe," she says, "was a trick the devil played upon God." Very different was her opinion of the Abbé Condillac, in whom we next find her absorbed. Joubert tries hard to swallow him, for her sake. His mind dries up for ten days in consequence, and he has to "oil it with Massillon." But if there was a difference in the form of the religious spirit within them, it was the love of the ideal which inspired it alike in each. Here they found common ground, and their letters often wander into enchanted depths of philosophy. Under his tutelage, she began to study Plato. "If I were better versed in reading the ancients," she writes, "I could determine with more precision what it is that is so modern in the *Phædo*; when nothing guides me in my decision, I attribute what I dislike to the Jew, and what I like to Plato. If that is not strictly just, at any rate it is judicious."

She grew to admire this dialogue more and more. "It is above everything!" she exclaims a little later, and proceeds to dilate upon its beauty; then, womanlike, she branches off into her personal reasons for loving it, describing how vividly it recalls her conversations with him, and

a certain walk they took together. The *Apology* of Socrates makes much less impression on her—probably, she thinks, because she had seen so many unjust trials and generous victims that interested her more vitally.

She did not stop at Plato; her master soon prescribed a course of Malebranche. "I was longing to read Malebranche," she answers, "but the time is past; the pedants have taken possession of my spirit, and I don't think it worth the trouble to resist them. But I can't help regretting a pleasure that you relish and give me the wish to relish." Her regret, happily, was curable, and Descartes' great pupil was soon numbered amongst her counsellors; also Kant, whose obscure depths fascinated her.

She did not spend all her time on the high seas of literature. Slighter books were not wanting in her "alcove." La Bruyère was "one of her great friends," read and re-read; *Don Quixote* was another; and as for *Tristram Shandy*, he was for ever being called in both by her and by Joubert, to cheer their spirits, or to draw luxurious tears from their eyes. Their letters are strewn with allusions to Uncle Toby, or with jokes drawn from the same source; there can hardly have existed in the whole of France

two more eager appreciators of "ce Yorick," who was causing so much enthusiasm there at the end of last century.

They were of their time in other things than this; we find them admiring works that we now consider crude, or even absurd. The Blücher buskins of Werther in his blue coat were breaking the ice of classical formalism and universal science. Romance was welcomed like water in a dry land, and Pauline and Joubert drank thirstily. Nymphs and grottoes were on the wane; Nature and peasants—or, even more, savages—in the ascendant. Wonder, and the books that inspired it, were in fashion, and the two friends wondered with their contemporaries. Ossian delighted them, so did the adventures of Captain Cook, always with certain criticisms which somewhat bridge the gulf between the two generations. Even "ce Young," as Joubert calls him, is quite acceptable; *Lilla Burello* "amuses him as well as anything else." We can only heave a sigh of relief that it *is* *Lilla Burello* which amuses him; it might have been worse. Nothing, perhaps, so divides one age from another as the things that amuse it; for whilst immortal pathos is not so hard to find, immortal fun, if such there be, belongs only to

the giants of the earth. But it must be remembered that books were few then, and that their readers started with a wish to make the most of them, not with the modern enthusiasm for finding fault.

### CHAPTER III

**B**OOKS, however absorbing, could not for very long appease Pauline de Beaumont's hunger for companionship. "I should be happy here," she writes, "if I were nearer to you, if you could take walks with me, or come and open my books and turn their pages, even were it only to scold my dear Abbé de Condillac. I wish intensely to have you here, because I'm enjoying a sense of well-being which I do not know anywhere else. I am so strong and well, that if I only spent three consecutive months here, you would see upon my face that look of jubilation and content that we sometimes admire upon the countenance of M. Tronc," (a country neighbour, whom she describes as the chief and model of all Bores). "Instead of this, I shall have to throw myself into the vortex again, and allow myself to be torn along by the torrent; never contented either with those who spoil me or with myself.

. . . I think incessantly of all the friends I have lost. I don't know why the remembrance of them has something sweeter, tenderer, and more lovable here ; I live, so to speak, with them, and all Ossian's dreams seem real to me. My mind is given up to a deep and gentle melancholy ; it feels neither accesses of gaiety, nor accesses of despair. But I fear that I have abused the hermit's right to talk of himself."

Joubert, seeing her need of human intercourse, and unable to supply it in person, begs her not to be so fastidious, or so scornful of her neighbours, even though they *are* tedious. His counsel produces some effect. "I waited for a ray of sunshine or an instant of well-being before writing to you," she says. "I am in the full enjoyment of the sun and the beautiful light of Theil, but I am still waiting for the well-being. Yet I write to you, though I feel myself much worthier of writing to that Arch-Bore, M. Tronc. If it is true that 'one must laugh *before* one is happy, under penalty of dying before one has laughed,' then I am right. . . . I have found some old letters of yours recommending me to love repose and solitude. You were right, I knew it ; but I was unworthy of solitude, and incapable of repose at that time. It is not the same with

me to-day. The life I lead is the one that suits me best, and I feel all the merits of repose, without excepting that which borders on annihilation. I think I vegetate pretty well, though much less agreeably than the plants which surround me. Beauchêne (the doctor) tells me that I have grown stouter; I am not so sure as he. I am not very pleased with my health. I have acquired the bad habit of only digesting whilst I walk. Reverie is fatal; so I have to burden myself with M. Perron in my walks, allow myself to be bored by him, and then pay him back. Every evening I put the same questions to him, and I receive the same answers, though I don't always hear them to the end. For his part, regularly at the same places in the road, he tells me the same stories; allowing for a few paces, I can prophesy them to myself, without ever being wrong by one minute. I suppose he does the same by my questions! This little interchange, which rests soul, mind, and imagination, does not always annoy me and sometimes diverts me. Besides, I do it as régime; but as for him, he has no earthly reason for régime, and I don't at all know how he likes it. I try to calm my remorse, by persuading myself that he is not yet quite certain that he is being bored—that he is still in the doubting stage. . . . In



spite of all my pedantry, I shall be charmed to embrace you. Your imagination will revive mine. At any rate, you will no longer reproach me with too much vehemence ; you will see what it is to have been at the school of M. Perron."

The peace of Theil did not only soothe her ; it became her refuge from the world which had disappointed her feelings and destroyed her interest in itself. In 1798 she went to Ormesson, to stay with Madame de Staël, hoping probably that Constant's power would have waned. But if so, she was soon undeceived, as her letter thence tells us. "I want to write to you," she says, "whilst I still resemble the person to whom you showed so much amiable benevolence. . . . Part of my fears have already been fulfilled. I no longer take pleasure in the world, and yet it has influence over me. I feel a dryness of heart there, which is a painful condition, if one has known a sweeter state. I entirely owe to you my knowledge that the one I regret is the best. That is much, and I congratulate myself on having established you as the judge of my feelings. Your past indulgence encourages me, and prevents the deep weariness which overpowers me here from spreading to my solitude. . . . I don't suit the society in which I live. My mind

wears itself out without fruit for me, or enjoyment for others. She who directs it has taken a road which does not lead to happiness. Her spirit is impelled in a direction unnatural to it. She no longer possesses anything but a noble and generous heart; *that* she has in an eminent degree."

The separation between the two friends was growing hopeless, whilst their respective attitudes towards public events, no less than the events themselves, divided them further. The Directoire, which had always been more of a makeshift than a governing body, had long been tottering, and was only waiting to fall, till the voice of some leader should be heard. The nation was weary of extremes: "Neither *Émigrés* nor Jacobins!" was its cry. When Napoleon at last blew his trumpet, down fell the Directoire and up rose the people, eager to obey, almost to a man, and full of the old enthusiasm, which, according to circumstances, could equally create either revolutions or thrones. The Coup d'État of the 18th of Brumaire made the General into a Consul—into the ruler of France. Pauline de Beaumont was a Liberal in mind; but she was an aristocratic Liberal, of philosophical ideals, prone to confound the Republic with blood-

shed ; dreading, above all else, the power of the populace ; and much inclined to welcome the strong sway of a single ruler. Madame de Staël, on the other hand, justified the Revolution, though only in theory and from devotion to abstract liberty. She clung to the idea of a republic, in spite of the abuses she had seen, and Napoleon's dictatorship filled her with agitation. Of personal admiration she was perhaps prepared to give him more than enough ; but he, with his conception of women as witty slaves, docile fellow-plotters, or glittering toys, could not endure her intellect, much less her political opposition to him. She got upon his nerves,—if he possessed such things,—and he revenged himself by a series of persecutions ; they were too much even for her noble powers of unreturned affection, and served to place the extra barrier of distance between her and Pauline de Beaumont. About a month after the 18th of Brumaire, the latter writes from Paris, where she was in the heart of the plottings and counter-plottings—Constant figuring as an active opponent of the Consul's—

“It is difficult to describe the condition in which we live ; it is not terror—that feeling does not exist here . . . it is only the journalists who are forced to a little prudence ; yet, in point of fact,

never were we less free. The police has trebled its means of vigilance, and everything is subject to it. The Government has not one agent whom it is not disposed to crush at the least suspicion, and there is not one of these agents who does not know how precarious his existence is . . . suspicious and suspected, envious and envied, they experience all the disagreeable feelings they inspire. . . . Your friend Benjamin is doing all he can not to be forgotten; unfortunately, like venomous animals, he only commands attention when he is stinging, and that is his whole existence. All sweet sensations are *nil* to him, yet he must have sensations to prevent his being bored, and in order to find pleasure, he labours at upsetting France. It is very wrong of me to speak to you of things you want to ignore; it is ridiculous to lay so much stress upon incurable evils; but they touch us so nearly at every point that it is difficult to forget them."

Napoleon's strong measures and stronger will soon inspired the nation—and Pauline as much as the rest—with hope and confidence. With her usual impulsiveness, she expected too much, and was disappointed.

"Your opinion," she writes in February, "has determined or strengthened mine on many points.

But I want to justify myself for my enthusiasm, which was made partly of hopes ; of hopes that have been deceived. I flattered myself that the Government posts would be filled by wise officials, and not by scholars with systems—and by all the old assembly. Napoleon, with his passion for pedants, gives me the idea of a *parvenu* Louis XIV. I except from my anathema the Council of State, almost wholly composed of men who join theory to practice. Then there are Tribunes whose names I read with delight—Riouffe, for instance. The public did not wish to listen to a speech of his, which certainly deserved a better fate. This speech, which was sent to me, has made him quarrel with Benjamin and Madame de Staël. They were nearly paid out by their fright, but she is forced to remain at Saint-Ouen ; her house, they say, was the meeting-place for all the malcontents. This is all they have gained from their childish impatience to play at opposition, without really knowing what opposition means, as Riouffe says. I am miserable at seeing the fate of a woman I love, linked to that of a man who is really detestable.”

Joubert was not so despondent about public affairs as she. His trust in Napoleon as “an admirable in-between-King,” was warmer than

hers, and it took the fact of the Empire to change his opinion. "He is not at all a *parvenu*," he says; "he has *arrived* at his position; I love him! Without him, there would be no possibility of enthusiasm for anything alive and powerful." As to the officials, he agrees with Pauline. "A false science is going to succeed to ignorance, and a false wisdom to folly," he writes. "May Heaven undeceive Bonaparte as to these gentlemen, and, at this price, may it preserve him! For, in spite of our former views, nature and fortune have made him superior to other men, and destined him to govern them. This man has, in his head, a real greatness, which he applies to anything near him possessing greatness of circumstance. He confounds individuals with essences; he takes the Institute for the Sciences, writers for scholars, and scholars for great men. His vast mind bears in itself the errors and the truth of a century which he admires too much. . . . He will leave, I think, in men's memories a high opinion of himself, but if he only lives a short time, he will leave nothing durable, or worthy to endure."

There is a strange irony in this dispassionate contemporary criticism of the Lucifer of History, who has long figured either as angel or devil to men's minds. Stranger still is it, that though

he did not die early, he fulfilled both these prophecies, gaining the high reputation expected by Joubert, but also leaving little of all his mighty work behind him, except roads and bridges and the Code Napoléon. Meanwhile he served, or rather mastered the moment, quieted the turmoil around him, and made Paris safe once more.

But even the inducement of security did not at first tempt Pauline de Beaumont from her hermitage. She passed nearly the whole winter at Theil, in absolute solitude, "without one moment of disgust or dulness." The world, she repeats, did not suit her, *if only she could have the courage to keep away from it*. She knew herself; the courage did not support her for very long, and certain events in her private life helped to hasten her removal from the country.

In the spring of 1799, Louise de Pange, who had so often faced a violent death, passed away calmly and naturally. She had been preceded the year before by her husband, who had died (somewhat ominously perhaps) of *maladie noire*. The poor "Grande" does not indeed seem to have been wholly successful in her private relations. There is a slight reserve in Joubert's

letter of condolence to Pauline, which indicates that she had not been really congenial to either of them. She was probably one of those unfortunate persons, with noble souls and provoking habits, who allure irritation.

"It is impossible," he writes, "to be as unhappy as one would wish, and I confess that this thought makes me miserable. The heart and the memory, judgment and feeling, hurl themselves against each other, at the first moment. Time will purify our remembrance. . . . There are griefs which delicate souls should postpone . . . so as to experience them more entirely."

But, at any rate, Louise had lived closely with Pauline, and, excepting for her nieces, was her only living relation. She was bound to feel her loss, and Joubert grew emphatic in pressing her to leave Theil altogether, since it now held nothing for her but sad associations. She was also evidently in money difficulties, for in this same letter he begs her to forgive his indelicacy, and to accept what she needs. Her poverty was, in fact, serious; money and possessions had been almost entirely swept away by the Revolution, and the estate of Theil had gone to her nieces.



It was doubtless her straitened circumstances that now induced Joubert to forego all his principles, and urge her to sue for divorce. In his *Thoughts* he has written : "Divorce is always displeasing ; Buffon has slandered turtle-doves" ; but in *her* case he advises it with great warmth, and says that he shall know no happiness till she is "safely unmarried." His only doubt is as to the name she should adopt, his own wish being for her old family name of Saint-Hérem, because Madame de Sévigné speaks of the Saint-Héréms, and he thinks the name peculiarly suited to Pauline. His anxiety was soon allayed, for the divorce actually took place in 1800, removing the sense of bondage from her, and probably did much to revive her desire for a salon of her own.

The old guests of her father's house, excepting Madame Krüdner, Madame Hocquart, and the Suards, had been engulfed in the Terror. To re-create society was like beginning life over again. But there was fresh material to her hand, and at this moment her social existence was acquiring a new importance for her. Since her rupture with Madame de Staël, she had more and more adopted the friends whom Joubert introduced to her, when they came from Paris to

stay with him. It was the wish for increased intercourse with them that finally determined her to leave the country for good and settle near them. And if we want to imagine her as she was in these last three years of her short life, it will be needful that we should become more intimate with the handful of men and women who soothed, amused, and stimulated her during that time, and formed a pleasant background to the drama of her heart, so soon now to begin.

The name of the poet Fontanes, perhaps the most important amongst them, is already known to us. He had been Joubert's friend since early youth. In 1786 he went to England, with the idea of starting an Anglo-French newspaper which they were to conduct together, and he sends him amusing comments upon the London of that day—the plays, the delicious “porter,” the comprehensible enthusiasm for Captain Cook, the incomprehensible rage for Fielding's novels rather than Richardson's, the beauty of Romney's painting, the inferiority of Reynolds to West, his own admiration for Gray and Dryden, and his disgust at British materialism, which permitted an Englishman to ask, “Are you rich?” where a Frenchman would say, “Are you cultured?” All this he pours forth, as well as laments at

the failure of his journalistic projects. He soon returned to France, to poverty and to letters. His repute gradually spread, especially after the romantic marriage which Joubert planned for him, and he became a light and a wit in literary circles.

In the particular one which welcomed Madame de Beaumont, he was known as "the Wild Boar of Erymanthus." He was indeed a formidable character to his contemporaries; a vehement critic, a lover of the ancients, and their fervent disciple as a poet. Himself passionate, eccentric, and spontaneous, he was an obstinate upholder of the calm, the regular, and the restrained in poetry, and "a sworn enemy to modern principles of composition." He had frequent quarrels with his admiring and admired Joubert on these subjects, though this did not prevent the classic from writing charming verses in praise of the philosopher—so charming, indeed, that they should have made a convert of the latter. "Hasten slowly" was the motto of "this irascible poet, frank even to fierceness, who could no more hide his opinion than he could take that of others." Vehement in friendship, he was as impetuous in his kindness as in his rages, and as stubborn in discussion as he was vivid. In later days he

was known to reascend eighty-four steps to Chateaubriand's garret at midnight, in order to resume an argument that he had not done with. Madame de Beaumont, though she enjoyed his company, was never quite at ease with the "Wild Boar." Perhaps he was too stormy to suit a nature which needed rest, and though he gave a flavour to her feast, it was sometimes too biting for her palate. She always wrote of him to Joubert as "*your* poet," acknowledging no partnership in him, and finding endless subjects of dispute with him. Now she rebels against his writing upon Kant, because he is "too much of a whirlwind" to understand him; now she scolds him for saying she did not love poetry, when she had but said that she cared for none but the best.

Yet it was to him that she was to owe the chief event of her life. During his second visit to London, after his exile of Fructidor the 18th, he came across a penniless *émigré* who was trying to get a livelihood in Grub Street, under the wing of the somewhat shady Lepelletier, publisher and journalist. Fontanes quickly detected genius and befriended the young man, for whom he promised great things. His liking was warmly reciprocated, and when at last he returned to

Paris, it was with a thousand plans for reunion with François Marie de Chateaubriand, who was soon to follow him to France.

The other members of the little circle were as eager to welcome genius as Fontanes. Some of them possessed a touch of it themselves; nearly all of them had, at least, some striking talent.

There was Matthieu Molé, the Benjamin of the salon and its political philosopher. Joubert called him his "Cato of twenty," and adopted him not only as the son of his heart, but also as the critic of his work. "His character," he said, "unites two seasons; one recognises in his whole being as much of maturity as of youth. There are both solidity and fire in all his feelings and ideas."

It may have been this warmth which called forth Joubert's enthusiasm for him, a little surprising when we remember his coolness about de Pange, so like Molé in thought and character. The latter attracted many others besides Joubert; "ripe conversation" was his delight, and the friends he chose were always older than himself. If he impresses the uninitiated as something of a prig, he had, at any rate, earned the right to take himself seriously. Son of the Président Molé, Matthieu, when a boy of twelve,

had moved the Revolutionary Tribunal by his touching entreaties, and rescued his father from the Abbaye, and the September Massacres. The President was borne home amidst a rejoicing mob, only to be again arrested two years later, when he perished on the guillotine. A few days afterwards, his widow (herself in the middle of a serious illness, and with three of her children stricken by fever) was hunted out of her home into a squalid lodging, where the lad of fourteen supported them in the utmost poverty. He witnessed the scene in the Convention when Tallien moved Robespierre's accusation; and survived the Terror to use his experiences in a work on the Ethics of Politics, greatly admired by Joubert.

At Molé's side, we see Guéneau de Mussy, handsome, literary, popular, and dilettante; also Bonald, the brilliant ultramontane, with "the flowing mind, whose ingenuity was taken for genius," and who, says Sainte-Beuve, rivalled Fontanes as the wittiest man of the day. Here, too, is the rich old banker, M. Julien, Montmorin's friend, who fusses delightfully over Pauline's comforts, and gives her a fatherly affection touched with romance; also his box at the *Français*. He introduces to her Pasquier

(afterwards the Emperor's Chancellor), keen, observant, and doubtless possessing a heart, though it was swaddled in red tape; gallant at least he was, for he yielded to Pauline his apartment in the Rue Neuve du Luxembourg, and thus made himself the sponsor of her salon.

More than gallant was Adrien de Lézay, introduced to her by Madame de Staël; a political writer, sparkling, yet moderate, whose books and whose melancholy interested her. "I am afraid the poor young man's presentiments will be fulfilled," she says to Joubert; "he is very unhappy and very ill." He evidently returned her kindness with a more complicated feeling, which brought him every day to her house; there seems even to have been some sort of confession from him, for, rather later, she writes: "One day I will tell you the cause of his assiduity—it is really rather droll." Like many other melancholy and romantic souls, he ended in a snug post, and when last we hear of him, he is well established as Governor of Strasbourg.

A great contrast to the meteoric de Lézay was Joseph de Chénedollé, the kindly, laborious poet, the tender friend, uncompromising in his fidelity; too steady, indeed, to make a good poet, for

though he had a poet's heart, the Muses' gifts were wanting. He had knowledge, Chateaubriand tells us, but his talent was learned and not spontaneous, whilst his temperament lacked joy, and was sad enough to earn him the nickname of "The Raven." It may be said that in every circle there is a familiar figure, dowdily dressed and of no definite position, who is loved by everybody, and by whom nobody is excited. This was the part devotedly filled by Joseph de Chénedollé in Madame de Beaumont's salon. He was well fitted for it by his talent for serving others, and his keen susceptibilities. An unflagging hero-worshipper, he lavished his adoration upon brilliant people less solid than himself. In early life, his idol was the fascinating Rivarol, talker and writer, whose tongue was as ready and eloquent as his thought was glib and fertile; in later years, he transferred his cult to Chateaubriand. He did not stop at heroes. Like others of his kind, his pathetic life was dignified by a great and unreturned affection. He gave a lifelong love to Chateaubriand's sister, the gentle Lucile, whose early life had also been shaken by a hopeless attachment to a Breton magnate. After the fashion of the day, she had been made an abbess



when still almost a baby—a merely nominal office, which neither debarred her from marriage, nor caused her to leave her home. But it surrounded her with a kind of mystery, and probably coloured her fancy.

She passed much of her girlhood alone in her chamber, learning all domestic occupations, and venting her feelings by writing down her fragmentary imaginations, which show a vein of real genius. Dark and pale, she developed a half-ghostly beauty, expressive of her nature. In early youth, she joined Chateaubriand in Paris, and lived there with her sister, Madame de Farcy. The girl's gifts soon attracted attention; Chamfort took special notice of her; Malesherbes and Delille made much of her. But the Revolution burst. The horrors around her and her own imprisonment overturned her reason, and she went mad. At the first danger, she had married, for the sake of protection for her family, an old man, a certain Comte de Caud, who died fifteen months later on the scaffold. Fantastic and intense, she lived in her dreams and in her affections, without any power of resisting calamity. When it came, her sensitiveness turned to suspicion, her pensive imagination to tragedy, and her lunacy, at first intermittent, brought

her at last to a deathbed in lonely lodgings. Occasionally Chénedollé's heart had moments of hope: "I won't say yes and I won't say no," was her answer to him, and then she would keep him waiting for months, to reject him at last with a coldness that seemed almost dislike. "She pities you, she pities you, she pities you!" was all the comfort Madame de Beaumont could give him; but Lucile wished neither to be bound nor free, and "detested the notion of monotonous matrimony." Her heart kept only two feelings, which prevailed even over her madness—her devotion to her brother, and a passionate, if troublous friendship for Madame de Beaumont, whom she survived for a short time. She could only endure *tête-à-tête* intercourse, and never entered the little salon when others were there.

There were, however, many ladies who, like the men, frequented it every night, discussing art, literature, and each other, with a frank, unconscious friendship, steady enough to satisfy even the English ideal of relations between the two sexes. Here were the high-souled, hot-headed Duchesse de Duras, a novelist herself, a promoter of elementary education, and later a literary confidante and political protector of

Chateaubriand's. Her expression reminded him of her intimate friend, Madame de Staël, he tells us, and "she united in herself the latter's force of thought with the grace of Madame Lafayette." Her chief novel, *Ourika*, had a great vogue, and was pronounced by Louis XVIII. to be "the *Atala* of the Salon." She shared with Chateaubriand all his ideas, acted as his ambitious Mentor in State affairs, and was "so stormy and courageous for her friends," that in later days she unearthed the vacant Swedish Embassy for him; in private she graced her benefits by permitting him to call her his sister.

Of the same world, and no less in after years a friend of Chateaubriand's, was the soothing Duchesse de Lévis,—“as calm as Madame de Duras was agitated,”—who lived amongst her shady chestnut-trees at Noiseul. “Her memory is to me as a still autumn evening,” he writes—“she died early . . . and is buried just above M. Fontanes.” By her side appeared the charming Madame Pastoret, who shed around her the fine aroma of St. Germain and the *bons mots* of literature. It was of this “intimate coterie” of well-born women that the Swiss Sismondi wrote twenty years later, with a pang of remembrance: “Here, everything excites interest, , , , whilst

respect, inspired by difference of sex, prevents the shocks of love . . . . It was above all here that I learned the charm of French amiability, when it is no longer encrusted with the shows of society. . . . Alas, I enjoyed myself too much!" concludes the impressionable gentleman.

More prominent than the other ladies in Pauline's daily life was the large-minded Madame de Vintimille, whose "happy humour" always had the power of calming Pauline. She was to morals what Madame de Beaumont was to the mind. So says Joubert, who turned to her for consolation after Pauline's death, and never found her wanting. His feeling for her was one of romantic gratitude, and he liked to express it prettily, as he did all pleasing emotions. Every year, on a certain day, he presented her with a bouquet of tuberoses, in remembrance of a particular walk they had taken together in the gardens of the Luxembourg. An intellectual woman she was not: she understood life and books by her heart rather than her brains, throwing it into whatever she touched with much warmth and some eccentric wisdom. When, for instance, she chose a tutor for her son, she rejected all applicants excepting those who had been in love themselves. Even her literary sympathies became a personal matter

to her, and she always went into mourning on the anniversary of Madame de Sévigné's death. She did not confine her tenderness to the dead, but loved her kind, transforming the most everyday incidents of society by her genial touch, and figuring as the well-bred gossip of a well-bred audience. Perhaps it was her spicy tongue which earned her the name of "Madame Bad-Heart" amongst her acquaintance; at any rate, they showed no want of appreciation of her gifts.

"Madame de Vintimille," writes Chateaubriand, "a woman of the old times such as hardly exists nowadays, went a great deal into the world and told us what happened there. . . . The sketch of its petty scandals, which she gave us with her piquant raillery, never offended us, but only made us more fully appreciate the value of our safety. Madame de Vintimille has been sung . . . by M. de la Harpe. Her language was circum-spect, her character self-contained, her intellect acquired; she had lived with Mesdames de Chevreuse, de Longueville, de la Vallière, de Maintenon; with Madame Geoffrin and Madame du Deffand."

Besides these new friends, the few survivors of old days came faithfully to the Rue Neuve du

Luxembourg. Madame Hocquart, the link between the past and present, whom Pauline must always have loved for her brother's sake ; Madame Krüdner, more mystic, perhaps vainer than before, and more than ever in love with princely proselytes ; also, more rarely, Madame de Staël, who rushed in spasmodically between her banishments, with her attractive relative, Madame Necker de Saussure. She was outwardly as affectionate as ever, but the breach was only patched up, not healed, and she was evidently felt to be too great and too stirring for the peaceful little salon ; their name of " Leviathan " for her is, at all events, rather sarcastic, and suggests surging foam and a lashing presence incongruous with its surroundings.

This was the choice company which from 1798 onwards, gathered round their " Swallow," Pauline de Beaumont ; first in the Rue St. Honoré, then, at M. Pasquier's request, in the shabbily furnished little apartment in the Rue Neuve du Luxembourg, destined to be the shrine of so many pilgrimages, grave and gay. It had many grander rivals, for society had revived with fresh force, after its long trance. Madame Récamier's salon was beginning ; Madame Joseph Bonaparte's and Madame Tallien's were flourishing ; the Princesse de Poix

and her brilliant court represented the aristocracy of the *ancien régime*; Madame Suard and Madame d'Houdetot still kept up the traditions of the old world of letters. "But the little salon of Madame de Beaumont, dimly lighted, by no means celebrated, only haunted by a handful of the faithful who met there every night, offered all the attractions of the time; it meant youth, liberty, movement, the new spirit, including the past and reconciling it with the future."

We cannot be surprised that when its members were away from Paris, the whole world should have seemed dull to Pauline de Beaumont, and that only Racine could supply her with a fitting address to her empty drawing-room. "*Déplorable Zion!*" she exclaims; "*qu'as tu fait de ta gloire?*" As for her own absence, when her health compelled her to a short stay at the baths of Mont Dore, she is in despair at her surroundings. "You cannot imagine all these Auvergnat jaws," she writes to Pasquier; "if Samson had met one, he would have made quite another job of it. Never would the Philistines have been heard of again." And then, with a pang of remembrance, she exclaims, "After the friends I have left, there is nothing good but solitude—for it is a means of finding them again."

It is little wonder either that, in order to be near such good company, Joubert should have upset his whole manner of living, and migrated every winter with all his family to Paris, where he took apartments in the neighbouring street of St. Honoré. "Peaceful society!" he cries with the yearning of after days, "where no discordant pretension was allowed to enter, and good humour was joined to fame—where, without knowing it, everyone made it their business to praise all that was praiseworthy!" And Chateaubriand, so soon to enter this assembly as its king, reiterates Joubert's lament, nearly half a century later. "Never again," he writes, "will there meet beneath the same roof so many distinguished persons of different ranks and different destinies, able to talk about the commonest things as well as about the most elevated; a simplicity of converse which did not come from poverty, but from choice. It was perhaps the last society where the old French spirit appeared. In modern France one no longer finds this urbanity, the fruit of education, transformed by long habit into a moral aptitude."

There is no fitter epitaph for Madame de Beaumont's salon than the words of the man who was to rule it, lending it the glory of his genius,



disturbing its quiet, and destroying the peace of the woman who made its centre.

Nothing was wanting ; the audience was ready ; the curtain was up : when the hero entered, the drama began.

## CHAPTER IV

THE little salon of the Rue Neuve du Luxembourg was not only prepared for Chateaubriand, but expecting him with excitement. Its members were always on the look-out for genius, and Fontanes' vivid descriptions of his new friend raised the highest hopes in them. In Chateaubriand's case, this was not surprising. He could boast everything that the conventional genius should possess—Olympian looks, fascinating manners, a birthplace on the sea-shore, the proper amount of suffering, and a romantic history.

Born at Saint Malo in 1768, of an aristocratic Breton family, he has himself given us a picture of his wild and fantastic childhood on the coast of Brittany as enchanted and as melancholy as any of Pierre Loti's, and more poetic than his in spirit. In this stern yet tender home of the ancient Breton régime, where Paris doings were unheard of, he dreamed his dreams and shared

them with his beloved sister Lucile, as they wandered hand-in-hand over the rocks. Every day the sea seemed different, the world ever-changing to them; every evening the two old spinsters in mittens, who came to play cards with his father, were the same. Presently he left the old château, and went to be educated at a priest's seminary, where he learned to know Virgil; played somewhat tame tricks with his schoolfellows; steeped himself in forbidden romances and poetry—which inspired in him, at fifteen, haunting and intoxicating visions of abstract woman; refused to adopt the profession either of sailor or priest, as suggested by his father; and finally, after the latter's death, became a soldier. After some six months' service, he resorted to Paris, where he learned to know both the literary and aristocratic worlds, became the friend of M. de Malesherbes, La Harpe, and Chamfort, was introduced to the King, and was present at a Royal Hunt. The taking of the Bastille changed his fortunes. He had stayed to hear Mirabeau, to see Robespierre, and the heads of the first two victims; but he left France whilst there was yet time, and, at the instigation of M. de Malesherbes, embarked for America, nominally in search of the North-West Passage and the

Polar Seas. He made some inquiries about them at Philadelphia, but finding no encouragement there, he speedily abandoned his high geographical aims for the quest after "La Muse" in South America. This journey was an epoch in his life, for its vast prairies and savannahs, its vegetation, and, above all, its savages, fulfilled an unsatisfied need in his nature, and gave a permanent stamp to his imagination. To us it is perhaps a rather wearisome stamp, for Chateaubriand intensified in himself the taste of his time for what was vague and exaggerated — delighting, above all, in "scenery," the simple old-fashioned panorama of precipices, mountains, and cascades, so different from the sensationally unsensational flats and turnip-fields dear to the modern lover of nature.

At the end of two years, in 1793, he returned home safely, to find his country afire with war, and his King in need of soldiers. Before, however, resolving upon any course of action, he retired to family life at Saint Malo, and during his visit *met* (if we may so express it) with the critical adventure of his roving and romantic existence. Although public stir and imminent danger seemed to allow no place at this moment for private plans, his sisters, especially the fantastic Lucile, alarmed

perhaps by his stories of ideal savage ladies—of the Atalas and Renés that he must often have painted for them—summarily decided on the necessity of his immediate marriage. Lucile had chosen the lady; a friend of her own, Mademoiselle de Lavigne, “white, delicate, slender,” and rich. His sisters had managed the affair without his knowledge; he had not seen her more than three or four times, as she walked on the shore, “with her pink pelisse, white gown, and fair hair blown by the wind . . . whilst he gave himself up to the caresses of his old mistress the sea.” “I did not feel,” he said, “any of a husband’s qualities, all my illusions were alive, nothing was exhausted in me.” But, impressionable and anxious to please, he quickly succumbed, married the lady, then did his best to abolish the fact by immediately leaving her for the Prince’s army on the Rhine. Here, for a space, he endured all the hardships and dangers of an *émigré’s* soldiership, and was at last shipped off, under great difficulties, to recruit beneath his uncle’s roof in Jersey.

It was now that he determined to cross the Channel and try his fortunes in England, a resolution which, after a few months’ waiting, he put into execution, and arrived in London in the

winter of 1793. Here he hobnobbed in garrets with his fellow-emigrants, starving with them one day in silent pride, the next earning a few shillings by precarious scribbling; laying in a wealth of quickly shifting experiences—privation, friendship, illness, love. The last of these he owed to a temporary tutorship in an English rectory, where he read poetry with Charlotte Ives, the daughter of the house, and in setting fire to her fresh young heart, managed to singe his own wings. The parents had learned to love him; they longed for their daughter's happiness, and, imagining that his diffidence alone prevented definite proposals, the mother sought to help him by offering him her daughter's affection and her own consent—only to discover that she was speaking to a married man. His slightly tardy chivalry compelled him, after completely upsetting the simple rectory, to depart instantly, and to suffer acutely from mortified sensibilities; and he never met his Charlotte again till twenty-five years afterwards, when she was comfortably married to a steady admiral, and approached him not as a man, but as a French Ambassador, whose influence she sought for her sons.

Chateaubriand meanwhile returned to London, to poverty, and to the tyranny of Lepelletier, a

French publisher in England, who now employed him regularly. It was at this time that his friendship with Fontanes began, and soon after that he published his freethinking essay on the Revolution, which opened for him the high-road to fame. Its irreligion, however, brought him severe condemnation from his elder sister, Julie de Farcey. The Terror had almost destroyed his family. His elder brother, the Viscount, and his wife had died on the scaffold; Lucile, plunged into a dungeon, had only emerged to marry the Comte de Caud, and, as we know, to lose him fifteen months later by the guillotine. We have also heard how, distraught by the horrors of her imprisonment, she lost her senses, and never quite regained their balance, remaining always the wild and wayward dreamer, incessantly troubled in mind, and occasionally subject to aberrations of a more violent nature. Madame de Farcey had also been thrown into prison with her mother, who, as soon as she was released, died from the effects of her suffering, broken-hearted, moreover, at the religious infidelity of the son whom she adored and would never see again.

Madame de Farcey spared Chateaubriand no detail of this deathbed, the tragedy of which he

had so much deepened. In old days, though always virtuous, she herself had belonged to the gay world. "What shall I answer God at the Last Day?" she had once said. "I only know verses!" But the Terror had changed the tenor of her thoughts, and she had become *dévoté*. She knew her brother's nature, and produced the desired effect. His opinions had little to do with reflection; they were emotional impressions, capable of being chased by another such impression, if sufficiently strong. All conversions, to be sure, are emotional; but a Pascal is converted by the pressure of an impersonal feeling, which seems to come from without, and a Chateaubriand by a personal feeling from within. His sister's letter made him weep; and his doubts were carried off on the tide of his tears. He believed once more; warmed himself in a pleasurable glow of reactionary faith; and, the Terror being past, resolved to return to his country and rejoin his family. Fontanes met him just outside Paris, according to a long-cherished project, and escorted him into the town, with the view of presenting him at once to the expectant congregation of the Rue Neuve du Luxembourg.

Before describing his relations to it, and its



influence upon himself, it may be interesting to review the qualities which coloured the career on which he was now setting forth; the qualities which made him what he was to the world, both in public and in private, apart from that inexplicable glamour of personality and genius which he shed upon all who knew him.

It is always a difficult matter to estimate the character of a sincere actor, of one who "acts his own emotions" to himself, and believes in each of them as if it were the feeling of a lifetime, though he may have only created it for a moment. The histrionic temperament does not necessarily imply any pretence, though it provides a natural facility for self-deception.

Chateaubriand, as well as Byron, belonged to this genus. They made a melodrama of life, themselves always playing the leading part, though this cheapened their thought and did away with their sense of responsibility. Neither of them could exist apart from an audience, whether of one or more persons; neither of them cared in the least for the stage when they were off it, preferring to be there at the wrong moment, rather than not at all; both loved dressing up, spiritually and physically—Byron, with his gorgeous costumes, no less than Chateaubriand,

who liked to start on an unadventurous journey in a postchaise, in the toilet of a brigand, his pistol-cases hidden beneath the carriage-cushions.

The absurd side of all this has some counter-balancing compensations. A melodrama needs effects, especially effects of virtue; and of the heroism, sacrifice, and generosity that come under this category, Chateaubriand, and still more Byron, were pre-eminently capable. The former could abnegate a fortune rather than hold office under the Duc d'Enghien's assassin, even though he had to announce the virtuous fact in the next letter he wrote; the latter could die, without a murmur, for the enfranchisement of a foreign country. They were no less melodramatic in their relation towards women, though they were divided in this respect by a fundamental difference of nature. Chateaubriand was a thorough sentimentalist; while Byron only knew episodes of sentiment in a life of almost savage British independence. We have only to look at the *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, and imagine Byron writing it, to measure the gulf between them. Yet here too there are points of analogy. Neither was really passionate; both had the particular coldness of an emotional temperament, with an infinite

capacity for being bored, and the poet's susceptibilities. Such men, though especially dependent upon Woman, should assuredly not marry *women*, till some law of the future has established a kind of modified Mohammedanism, allowing a periodical, if not simultaneous, change of wives. Both the geniuses in question were Don Juans; but Chateaubriand was more of the intellectual libertine, in search of sympathy and mental excitement—an expurgated edition of Lord Byron, if we may so express it.

Both were doubtless affected by their own view of themselves: Byron posed as the bad man, and thought himself worse than he was; Chateaubriand posed as the good man, and thought himself better than he was. Byron was gifted with the sense of humour; Chateaubriand had none—a great help perhaps to the virtues he cultivated, and a means of accounting for the fact that he remained in the thick of the world which he scorned, whilst Byron fled from it. Yet in spite of all this, the fact remains that Chateaubriand was, if not the truer, at least the better man of the two. Though he was always “Le Grand Ennuyé,” he was never either a cynic or a scoffer; perhaps he kept too many illusions to be the former, and needed too much spiritual support—

even personal attention from the Deity—to be the latter. But apart from these negative considerations, the sense of reverence, the poet's large imagination, were undoubtedly his. They affected all his views, even those on women; for, whatever his relations with them, he always treated them with respect, not as Oriental slaves, but as equal companions.

Still more directly did his sense of reverence influence his attitude towards religion. This makes another great difference between him and Lord Byron, both as to their life and their function in literature. For a long way their roads, as creators, seem almost identical. Childe Harold is the twin-brother of René, though educated at a public school, which René certainly was not. Chateaubriand even accused Byron of borrowing from him. But when we come to creed, the likeness stops. Where Byron was slashing at a convention and confounding it with the reality, Chateaubriand, however sentimentally, was seeking the truth that would give life to the form. Thus, whilst Byron occupies the position of the destroyer of faith, Chateaubriand undertook the mission of reviving religion in France and becoming the poet-ally of the Pope. His *Génie du Christianisme* was the emotional complement

the Concordat. The one sprang from sentiment ; the other from Napoleonic foresight ; neither of them from piety nor the true religious sense. Yet they both succeeded in kindling these qualities in France. And although there is some irony in the fact that, whilst Mrs. Grundy was drawing her skirts away from Byron, Chateaubriand was snugly ensconced in the Vatican and being blessed by the Pope, it is but fair to remember that he was one of the few who contrived to combine the theory of the pessimist with the creed of the optimist, and that he never disbelieved in belief.

It requires, however, more than this—more even than the glamour of his magnetic personality—to account for the effect he produced upon his friends and all with whom he came in contact. For he created not only sudden attractions, but lifelong attachments, steady and enthusiastic. Their cause was as simple as it is amiable ; for in his blue veins there ran the milk of human kindness, instead of the champagne of inhuman unkindness which flowed in Byron. Chateaubriand warmly loved his kind, even though it was a love for what they gave him of adulation, sympathy, or companionship. He more than loved them—he depended upon

them ; and dependence, joined to genius, makes an appealing combination. It is no wonder, then, that he enslaved such women as Madame de Custine, the Duchesse de Noailles, Madame de Duras, and many others (not to mention his intercourse with Pauline de Beaumont and Madame Récamier), and had friends almost as ardent and quite as faithful amongst men. He had the woman's power of making each one feel that he—or she—was the one person needed by him at the moment.

It is not too much to say that when Chateaubriand entered the salon in the Rue Neuve du Luxembourg, an electric thrill ran through every one of its members. Fontanes was already vanquished ; Joubert welcomed the conqueror with a kind of paternal cult ; Chênedollé, always longing to kneel, at once prostrated himself, and, not content with an idol, wished, as we know, to make a brother-in-law of him also. He succeeded at least in constituting him the confidant of his hopeless love affair, which he continued to pour out to him ; and it gives us some notion of the demands of salon friendships, when we find that they saw each other every day for two years.

It is more of a surprise, and also of a relief, to find the self-contained Molé losing his

head ; spending his days in running about the country with Chateaubriand, and insisting on partaking of the same dishes at dinner as he did. As for the ladies of the circle, they, of course, succumbed to his charm. One of them, as we know, did more than that. As soon as Pauline de Beaumont set eyes upon François de Chateaubriand, her fate was sealed. They achieved the impossible,—rather, perhaps, the impossible after five-and-twenty—and fell in love at first sight. It became almost at once the need and excitement of his existence to pay her a daily visit, beside his appearance in her drawing-room in the evening.

Chateaubriand had no need to adapt himself to the society which now welcomed him. He was *born* into it ; his mind for the first time discovered its native country, where it breathed more easily and expanded more vigorously. Without further ado, he took up his abode in it, frequenting it every night without fail, and adding the touch of the enchanter's wand to the little salon—so *spirituel* and spiritual in the same breath, and already so much distinguished by that combination from all its contemporaries.

Chateaubriand was not only received, but baptized into the brotherhood ; his salon names

were "The Young Savage" and "The Great Raven." Guéneau de Mussy was already called the "Little Raven," Chénedollé, "The Raven of Vire," Fontanes, the "Wild Boar of Erymanthus," whilst, as we know, Madame de Vintimille was "Madam Bad-Heart," Madame de Staël, "Leviathan," and Pauline de Beaumont, "The Swallow."

The only interruption to this Parisian Feast of Reason was a short flight made by "The Great Raven" to Villeneuve, where Joubert had retired for a time. He had discerned at a glance the younger man's special gifts and importance. "It is only needful," he exclaims, "to disentangle him from Rousseau, Ossian, and the vapours of the Thames . . . and you will see what a poet we shall have to purify us from the dregs of the Directoire."

But genius was not the sole attraction. Chateaubriand, like many literary orators, was simpler in intimate intercourse than in print. His more human side comes out in a letter of Joubert's, written at this time :

"How I wish you were at Villeneuve!" it runs, "so that you might judge of what incomparable kindness, of what perfect innocence, of what simplicity of life and manners, and—with



all that—of what incomparable gaiety, of what peace and happiness he is capable, when he is only subject to the influences of the seasons, and excited by nobody but himself.”

The country was but a short interlude. He could not long keep away from Madame de Beaumont. His *tête-à-tête* visits increased from one to two every day, and he speedily made of her both his critic and his audience. We have already seen that she was peculiarly fitted for such offices. Creative genius was the necessary complement of her nature; it gave her the exhilaration she needed and could not find in herself. Chateaubriand's genius suited her wants more fully than any with which she had come in contact, and from the first moment of their meeting, her feeling for him was inseparable from it. She hailed the Romantic School in his person; his style was a revelation to her. “It gives me, as it were, a *thrill* of love; he plays the harpsichord on all my fibres,” she writes.

The emotional and intellectual excitement put into her days by his presence and his works—read to her in his own voice—acted upon her health. “It seems to me,” she writes, “that my health is actually better now.”

For a year from 1800-1, she hardly left Paris. Her interests multiplied. Soon after his arrival there, Chateaubriand had introduced to her his sister, Lucile de Caud, whom he was anxious to draw out of the dreamy solitude which had been deepened by his sister Madame de Farcey's death. Both Joubert and Madame de Beaumont, he tells us, felt "a passionate attachment and a tender pity for her," and Pauline and she "leaned one towards the other, like two flowers of the same kind, ready to fade." The two women began a correspondence which lasted till Pauline's death, though Lucile often clouded their intercourse by moods of mad suspicion; giving false addresses, examining the seals of her letters, and, like Rousseau, imagining hidden enemies everywhere, whilst she wandered restlessly about, unable to settle in any place. Her unbroken friendship with Pauline says much for the affection on both sides, for to those she loved less, she easily grew tyrannical. "Later on," writes Chateaubriand, "she became attached to Madame de Chateaubriand, my wife, and gained an ascendancy over her which became painful, for Lucile was violent, impetuous, unreasonable, and Madame de Chateaubriand, subject to her caprices, had to hide herself away, in order

to perform those services which a richer friend renders to one who is sensitive and less fortunate."

Her brother, "the irresistible enchanter," as Madame de Beaumont calls him, was, at any rate, on the highroad to fame and wealth. Pauline had as stimulating an effect upon his genius, as he upon her health. He was in a white heat of creation, his brain teeming, as he somewhat feverishly tells us, with the burning twins, *Atala* and *Réné*, which were originally to form part of *Le Génie du Christianisme*, a work he had already mapped out. We can fancy him in the little Parisian room, lost in a flow of golden speech, describing, discussing, gesticulating, while his critic lay upon the sofa, listening with an occasional remark, trying to supplement the admiration in her eyes by the impartiality of her tongue.

He had a rougher judge in Fontanes, who had already done him service by introducing him to his intimate friend, Madame Bacciochi, and, through her, to Napoleon's brother, Lucien Bonaparte; also by procuring him work on his own paper, *Le Mercure*. Resolving at this time to re-write *Le Génie du Christianisme*, and publish *Atala* separately, Chateaubriand took the latter

work to "The Wild Boar," who, when he came to the priest's speech over Atala's deathbed, exclaimed in an abrupt voice, "That's not the thing—do it all again!" Three hours of picturesque dejection followed, then came inspiration. The passage was re-written without one correction, and with some palpitation taken back to Fontanes, to receive his enthusiastic approval.

Publicity was, however, to come to him by another channel. Fontanes had published an adverse review on Madame de Staël's *De la Littérature dans ses Rapports avec les Institutions Sociales*. She had replied in a letter published in the second edition of her book. Chateaubriand, kept, as he tells us, one night from sleep by the persistent cooing of two pet turtle-doves, though to secure quiet he had packed them *in his portman-teau*, was inspired to support Fontanes in a letter for the *Mercury*. He wrote it at once; it had an effect; was talked about—and raised him from obscurity.

It must be added that it also caused a rupture between him and Madame de Staël, who came to pour out her wounded feelings into the ear of Madame de Beaumont. Pauline felt deeply the coldness between her two friends; but

"Delphine" not only loved the stir of a reconciliation as much as the agitation of a quarrel; she was also the soul of generosity, and liked to pardon. It was not difficult for Pauline to make peace between them, and the truce, furthered doubtless by Chateaubriand's disapprobation of Napoleon, continued, excepting for occasional skirmishes, during the rest of their lives. They began a sort of playful intimacy, and she always addressed him in English as "My dear Francis." Yet the friendship between them seems never to have grown really close. Madame de Staël was herself too much of a tempest, a talker, a genius, to suit the needs of another genius, who sought a good listener and a calm atmosphere, above all things.

His letter to the *Mercur*e was followed (in 1801) by the publication of *Atala*. Like Byron, he awoke one morning to find himself famous. Paris could talk of nothing but the sentimental savage maiden, whose passionate soul he had depicted. Every drawing-room rang with his name; every street was placarded with it; whilst all the glittering fringes of reputation, parodies, caricatures, lampoons, and burlesques of his book, were his in abundance. Savages

in cocks' feathers raved to one another on the stage about solitude ; country inns were adorned with coloured prints of aborigines ; and the Abbé Morellet cracked famous, if indelicate jokes upon the hearts of Red Indians.

The psychological intricacies of the savage, perhaps the only being who knows no such complications, cannot fail, in our scientific days, to produce a sense of constraint, even of absurdity. Chateaubriand needed a Jean-Jacques *mise-en-scène*, on a sublime scale ; he also needed to satisfy the modern spirit of moral analysis. The tropics alone could fulfil his scenic demands ; and as the only figures proper to such a frame are aborigines and those that deal with them, he was obliged to invest the natives with qualities they could not possess, and to overcharge a missionary, the only white man available, with sentiment. These facts are apt to make us unjust to the magic of his style, which still remains to us unaltered by time ; and which, in those days of enfeebled and police-inspected classicism, must have seemed little short of a miracle.

But his private audience in the Street of the Luxembourg, plunged though they were in high topics, were neither heavy nor pedantic. They

were capable of being diverted by lighter themes than nature on the Ohio. The Théâtre Français was an absorbing pleasure to them, and divided them into camps according to their favourite actress. At one moment they are one and all enamoured of Mademoiselle Duchesnois, the rival of Napoleon's favourite, Mademoiselle Georges. Pauline, foremost in enthusiasm, sees her every night from M. Julien's box, and never rests till she gets the actress to take luncheon with her, "I find it impossible," she writes to Pasquier, "to forgive *those* who think her stupid" . . . (an allusion to Geoffroi, the critic and admirer of Mademoiselle Georges): "She talks little and uses few words. . . . The only thing one can do, is to find her sensitive chord."

Soon after Chateaubriand's appearance, Duchesnois, though still the support of tragedy, found her glory eclipsed in the salon world by the rising star of Talma's genius. "Himself, his time, and antiquity," was Chateaubriand's summary of him. "He had," he continues, "the fatal inspiration, the disturbed genius of the Revolution through which he passed, and did not know the *gentilhomme* of the old society. His Othello smacked of Vendôme . . . but his



Chateaubriand





grace, which was not the conventional grace, seized you like grief."

Meanwhile, Chateaubriand was no less anxious than Pauline to produce his book — and under her auspices. For this purpose, she resolved to carry out an ideal plan of hers, and take some little cottage in the country, where they might give themselves up to work, uninterrupted save by the occasional visits of friends. They found what they wanted at Savigny, now only half an hour by rail from Paris, then much more inaccessible; and she began to arrange for their life together in Arcadia. Madame Joubert undertook their pots and pans; Joubert their library; Pauline all arrangements for "The Savage's" literary labours. She was enchanted: "I shall hear the sound of his voice every morning, and I shall see him at work," she writes to Madame Vintimille, just before they established themselves at Savigny in the May of 1801.

"We have hardly been here twenty-four hours," she writes to Joubert, "and I am already impatient to send you news of us. I think you really must feel more curious about our hermit than about me. You know too well how much the country charms me, and how I love solitude.

So it is of the Savage that I shall talk to you. Even before the end of the journey he had forgotten his conversation with Fontanes, his reasons for uneasiness and melancholy. I have never seen him calmer, gayer, more of a child, or more reasonable. Everything gave us pleasure — even Monsieur Pigeau. We were dreading his face on the doorstep: he wasn't there. And later, when he came to make me sign his inventory of the house, with the supplement of twelve hens and two cocks, and the retrenchment of seven lines consisting of twenty-two words, we were seized with a mad fit of laughter which is still going on. After his departure, we went to the Springs of Jouvisy by a short and charming cut. At ten o'clock, all the household was in bed and sleeping soundly. This morning the Savage read me the first part of the first volume, and showed me the changes he means to make. To say the truth, I should wish him colder and more enlightened critics than myself; for I have not come out of my enchantment, and am much less severe than he—which is detestable! Farewell—I embrace Madame Joubert. I must repeat that this country is charming and that we are expecting you with the greatest impatience."

These first hours were but the heralds of many golden days. Pauline seems to grow gayer and gayer as the time slips by. Every morning they worked together, he creating his *Génie du Christianisme*, she transcribing and revising what was already written. Every afternoon they set out to discover new walks amidst the woods and meadows, and talked incessantly as they wandered, about their past lives, from childhood onwards. Chateaubriand, doubtless, had the lion's share of reminiscence, but this only made his companion happier. When they returned, there was reading aloud, with endless quips and intimate understandings; then, when the stars came out, they again sought the open, and sat in the garden till bed-time."

Chateaubriand has left us a happy picture of their pastoral life, a little later, when the Jouberts came to pay them their promised visit.

"I shall for ever remember some of these evenings spent in the shelter of friendship; when we came back from our walk, we all met near a basin of running water placed in the midst of a lawn in the kitchen-garden. Madame Joubert, Madame de Beaumont, and I sat down on a bench; Madame Joubert's son rolled at our feet

on the grass. . . . M. Joubert walked apart in a gravelled alley; two watch-dogs and a cat played round about us, whilst pigeons cooed on the edge of our roof. . . . It was usually on evenings such as these that my friends made me talk of my travels. I have never described the deserts of the New World so well as then. At night, when the windows of our pastoral salon were open, Madame de Beaumont watched the different constellations, and said that I should one day remember she had taught me to know them; since I lost her, I have often sought those stars, the names of which she told me, in the heavens, from the midst of the Campagna, not far from her tomb in Rome."

Savigny saw other guests beside the Jouberts. There was Lucile, sadder than ever, her head bent, her whole being stamped "with the fixed expression of her misery—Lucile, whom all welcomed and tried to make happy, but who needed," wrote her brother, "an atmosphere made on purpose for her." There was Fontanes also, "who was most amiable, and from whom we were lucky enough to force some verses—admirable verses they are too!" There were doubtless likewise all the remaining members of the little circle to make *urbs in rure* for their hosts.

Chateaubriand not only received visits, but paid them. We hear of his going to stay about this period with the genial, clear-headed Madame de la Briche, Molé's mother-in-law, "a woman of whom Happiness could not rid itself." At this house he met Madame d'Houdetot and Saint Lambert, whose long and faithful *liaison* custom had canonised. "The Savage" returned, by no means the worse for his unwonted dissipation, for his companion writes that "he has fallen back upon solitude with a great deal of confidence . . . and is working like a nigger. . . . All 'the Marais' (Madame de la Briche's estate) is going to come down upon us for breakfast or dinner."

Another and still more acceptable guest was *Atala*, who now arrived translated into Italian. M. Joubert had just lost his well-loved mother, and longed, as he says, "to pour into Pauline's ear the secret things of grief"; nevertheless, he remembers to send them a copy of the translation, with fresh appreciations of Chateaubriand's genius. "The essential thing is to be natural to oneself," he writes, "and one will soon seem natural to others . . . the personal accent always pleases. It is only the accent of imitation which

displeases, when it is not that of everybody else."

He adds some literary news. He has discovered a masterly article, which he is sure must be Bonald's, with an enthusiastic allusion to Chateaubriand, and recommends Pauline to repeat it to the latter, as an antidote to some adverse criticism which had plunged him into dejection. There follows a racy description of a walk with Fontanes, who was preparing an article on Kant, and to whom Joubert "wished to preach love of the heights and a horror of the battle-field."

"But he is not yet free enough from matters of bile and blood. Yesterday, however, a great deal of phlegm tempered his force, and we had no explosion, only a concentrated fire. I had exhausted myself in the morning by revising and annotating the first volume of Kant, so that he might be able to get the heart of it at once, with a full knowledge of the facts. I had re-read, compressed, made extracts, compared, with the sweat of all my being. . . . My man arrives, and at the first word I say to him he answers: 'Pooh! pooh! I have made my abstract. There's nothing new in it all, and nothing that's worth the trouble of thinking about. Pooh!

pooh! pooh! pooh!’ I was well paid for my morning’s work. . . . As for Kant’s doctrine, I remain where I was when I left you, and I add that he is utterly mistaken in his *measurement* of all things. *I* think it reaches higher, and I am right. . . . God is as necessary to metaphysics as to morals, and even more so.”

To this the more sceptical Pauline replies: “I had left Fontanes so determined to write his article on Kant from one point of view, that if your investigations had not given you so much pleasure, I should have deeply regretted the care and attention they cost you. But you have gained some ideas which please you, and have found an ill-placed light, for which you will build a lighthouse at your own sweet will. Still, do agree that without the light, the lighthouse would not deserve such a grand name—that it would be useless, or rather break-neck. As for the rest, the article on Kant, without being what it would have been had it only been conceived *after* you gave your impressions, will still be very much mitigated. That is one more obligation owed you by Fontanes—that second whirlwind! May your breath at last send him to those elevated regions for which he is made!”



Joubert soon lets her know that he has been trying to send a special post with the great news that "Kant, this terrible Kant, who is to change the world, this Kant who turns so many heads, who occupied mine so much and who made yours dream—Kant in short, the big Kant, . . . is translated almost entirely—but only in Latin! . . . Four enormously fat volumes in octavo, which cost me, if you please, thirty-six livres (francs) in French money. . . . Imagine a German-Latin . . . ostrich eggs which you have to break with your head, and in which, generally speaking, you find nothing."

If Fontanes, the "second whirlwind," was restive, how much more was to be expected from the first? As usual, Madame de Staël was not found wanting.

"Just as we were leading such a sweet existence," Pauline writes, "and making the enchanting project of going on and taking root in it, terrible quarrels were being planned for the poor hermit with *The Whirlwind* of this world—I mean Madame de Staël. People accused him of having shown her letters boastingly. It is to me that she carried her complaints, soft of word and bitter of heart. They certainly have no foundation, and his justification is easy. . . . But let us

leave the worries of this world, which one should only see in perspective and, like tempests, from the shore, so that one may congratulate oneself on being in shelter."

Their only other disturbance was a short flight of Pauline's to Paris, to fetch some books and see Joubert's son, who was ill there; and an invitation from Joubert himself to come and share the remains of a tender pigling he was fattening for them, with the enthusiasm of Charles Lamb on a like occasion—leading one to imagine that there is some mystic relation between young pork and the literary palate. But even that dainty could not draw the toilers from their work. The *Génie du Christianisme* was making rapid progress under Pauline's supervision, and she sends regular bulletins of it to Joubert. Small wonder that, in after years, Chateaubriand should have written: "Without the peace which she gave me, I should perhaps never have finished a work which I could not manage to write during my misfortunes." Agitated though her nature was, she could be calm for another, and for him, throughout their intercourse, she remained perfectly serene, saving her cares and questionings for her faithful Joubert.

She went on now in her work of revi-

sion, perpetually tormented by a feeling that her criticism was partial and inadequate, and her fears that, even such as it was, it might depress and paralyse his powers. Nobody knew better than she that the cardinal sin of the critic is to destroy the writer's spontaneity and therefore his magic ; nobody could more skilfully perform the delicate task of separating the defects of that spontaneity from its virtues. "The secret of the enchanter is to enchant himself," she writes, and goes on to describe how he cast that spell no less on what he read than what he wrote. "What amazes me," she exclaims, "is the harvest that he has reaped out of those eight volumes of *Les Moines*—that dry and arid heap which wearied me to death. There is really a sort of miracle in this power of his. . . . He seems to have done nothing but collect a few stray facts, and yet with no more than this, he makes you burst into tears and weeps himself, without ever suspecting that his talent has anything to do with the effect which he produces and feels. But in the middle of all this glamour, I must confess to you the fear which torments me and which does not leave me one moment's rest. He wants his work to appear in the month of February at latest, and, judging by what he

has still to do, and, above all, to *re-do*, if it appears so early, I am absolutely convinced that this can only be with great imperfections—easy to efface if he would only give himself more time; but the least note in this tone plunges him into a dejection which comes near despair, so that I hardly dare confess all my fears even to myself. My only hope is that when I show him these imperfections, he will feel compelled of his own accord to do away with them; but will not this impatience to finish his book create illusions for him? I have never felt more bitterly than now the misfortune of not having a firmer, surer, more experienced taste, and of lacking that force and conviction which carry people away. . . . What alarms me more than anything is the lightness with which he lays down certain judgments, which—if they are not to scare the public—demand to be presented with infinite tact and gentleness. But there is no remedy for that. What makes me timid in my observations is that it is really important for him that his work should appear quickly. Otherwise I should have much more courage and should be frightened at nothing but his extreme docility.”

This precipitate haste and positiveness were the natural defects of his exuberance. So also

was his lavish profusion of quotations, for which Joubert blames him.

"Tell him," he writes to Pauline, ". . . that he overdoes ; that the public will care very little for his quotations, but a great deal for his thoughts ; that it is much more curious about his genius than about his knowledge . . . that, in short, it counts upon Chateaubriand to make Christianity lovable, and not upon Christianity to make Chateaubriand lovable. . . . Let the only aim of his book consist in *showing the beauty of God* in Christianity, and let him prescribe for himself a rule imposed on every writer . . . 'Hide thy knowledge.' . . . Our friend is not a mere water-pipe, like so many others ; he is a living spring, and I wish all he writes to seem as if it spirted out of him. His quotations are, for the most part, blunders ; where they become necessities, he must put them into the notes. . . . Bossuet quoted, but he quoted from the pulpit, equipped with mitre and crozier ; he quoted to those already convinced. But these times are not the same. . . . If poetry and philosophy can once bring men back to religion, it will be soon reinstated, for it has its own allurements and powers, which are great. . . . The difficulty to-day is to give back to men the desire to return

to it. He must limit himself to that ; for that is what M. de Chateaubriand can do. . . . But make him renounce those authorities which nobody will now recognise ; let him only use means that are exclusively his own—that are of the time and the author.”

Pauline hastens to answer that she read all Joubert's letter aloud to her “Savage”: “He was enchanted with it, but he will not profit by it. He exclaimed twenty times, ‘He is the best, the most amiable, the most astonishing of men! Yes! I see what he is at. He is always afraid of my quoting too much.’ Then he burst out laughing. He has really cut out several quotations — but he has added a great many too.”

We have cited these letters at length, because it is interesting to see how much more justly Joubert appreciated Chateaubriand's special powers than did that writer himself. In his own eyes he was always the creator of a new religion—a prophet—a redeemer with an artistic temperament. Nothing vexed him more than to be considered merely an apostle of beauty. Like many artists, he valued most in himself that for which others cared least, and enjoyed being a moralist more than all else. And it *was* as a

moral seer that the world hailed him, when, in the course of the next year, his book came out. It had been heralded by Fontane's articles in the *Mercure*, published six months before, whilst Chateaubriand was still working at Savigny, so that the public was on tiptoe with expectation.

Nor were its hopes disappointed. His work, begun in the glow of his repentance and belief after his mother's death, had two main elements of success: he wrote it in a gush of feeling which carried him away; and it also bore that final stamp of genius—an insight into the needs of his time. After the sorrows of the Revolution and the dry unbelief of the Encyclopædists, the nation experienced “a craving for faith and a voracity for religious consolation.” The fragments of Christianity which had been offered to it for the last fifty years—brotherhood, equality, hope of good—had been doled out singly, under other names, such as Rousseau's or that of the Revolution. Chateaubriand had but to hold the cross aloft, and—as he rather flurriedly announces—“the people rushed into the House of God, as they would into the house of a doctor on the day of an epidemic.” The task which seemed to him impossible was accomplished; according to him-

self, he had "destroyed the influence of Voltaire, which had prevailed for more than half a century."

There was one other man who knew—with a supreme knowledge—how to feel the pulse of the nation, and whose approval was not only helpful but indispensable to Chateaubriand's success. That was Napoleon, who was well pleased to find that the writer had been planning in literature what the dictator was about to execute in politics, and that the book would greatly help not only the effectiveness of the Concordat, as we have already seen, but also the glory of the Peace of Amiens. His appreciation was not lessened by the dedication of the work to himself. "The nations are gazing at you!" it began; and, in return, the Consul was bound in politeness to regard at least *one* representative of one nation. Be this as it may, Bonaparte gave orders that on the same day that the two public events were celebrated by the solemn Te Deum in Notre Dame, at which he, with all his generals, was present, Fontanes should write in *Le Moniteur* an official account of *Le Génie du Christianisme*. Later, says its author, Napoleon repented of this favour; for he found that Royalist principles followed in



natural sequence upon the religious ideas of the book.

It raised all the dust of discussion which shows that a big chariot has gone by. It was read everywhere and by people of all nationalities; the Swiss Sismondi (married to an English Quakeress) compared its tenets to Quakerism; in Paris, conversation about it was endless; philosophers and prelates alike surrounded its creator; the Voltaireans cried aloud and rushed to arms; the ladies of Paris adored him; his own circle enjoyed even more rapture about him than usual. At a party given in his honour, he was received by a shower of scented billets. He "blushes to describe" the bowed heads and beating hearts of the eager duchesses who stoop to pick up every scrap of his writing and to hide it in their aristocratic bosoms. One of them conceals an envelope of his in her hair. Probably it was the Marquise de Custine, whose long tresses he often sang in later days. Only Madame de Staël—soured perhaps by her memories of the summer—refused to be enthusiastic or to believe in his religious career. The uncut book was brought to her: "she passed her fingers through its pages; happened on the chapter called "*La Virginité*," and said to M. Adrien de Mont-

morency, who was with her, 'Good heavens, our poor Chateaubriand! How flat this will fall!'"

The book, we know, did not appear till almost half a year after the life at Savigny which produced it. The little household had been broken up rather suddenly. Its two inmates were just planning a charming *tête-à-tête* trip to Burgundy, where Pauline was to show him the haunts of her childhood so often described to him. But at this moment, the chance of a diplomatic appointment came to him—an appointment which made reunion with his wife advisable. Pauline de Beaumont showed the stuff she was made of; she loved so much that she cared for the welfare of her friend more even than for his presence and her own happiness. She used all her influence to persuade him to return to Madame de Chateaubriand, and at length succeeded. Their holiday journey was given up, and he departed—leaving her inconsolable.

Chateaubriand had received a short visit from his wife in Paris, directly after his return to France; now he only rejoined her for a short space, not living with her till nearly two years later, in 1804. He returned to Paris, Pauline

soon following him and reopening her salon in its old quarters. Its inmates at once came back to it, "The Great Raven" amongst them, and their intellectual existence continued as intimately as before.

## CHAPTER V

CHATEAUBRIAND'S promised appointment did not immediately follow his return. He was now the lion of Paris, and was fast widening his social circle. Rather before this, he had become acquainted with Madame Récamier, though he tells us that "the curtain dropped immediately"—for the moment, at least. It was at this period that he began to be intimate with Madame de Sabran's daughter, the stately, reckless Madame de Custine ("The Queen of Roses," as Boufflers calls her), so soon to be made alternately happy and wretched by closer intercourse with him. Their friendship was, indeed, *too* close from its earliest days. We have already seen her saluting the Genius of Christianity; a short while after, she paid him a visit in his rooms, only a few steps from Madame de Beaumont's house, without either woman's suspecting the other's relations to Chateaubriand.

In later days, he superintended Madame de Custine's reinstalment in her domain of Fervaques, which had been confiscated by the Jacobins.

It was a miracle that she survived the Terror. At one moment she was arrested, and only escaped from the hands of the Revolutionary Commissioners by making a caricature of one of them—so brilliant that, being Parisians, they could not resist it and released her amid a burst of laughter.

Another time, she was coming out from the trial of her father-in-law, General Custine, and was mobbed as she stood on the steps of the Palais de Justice. The raging people all but seized her. "Take my baby," said a woman among them, moved by the expression on her face, "and you will be safe!" Madame de Custine obeyed, and held the child up in her arms. The sentimental crowd at once appreciated the dramatic effect, applauded loudly, and allowed her to go in peace.

After her retirement to Fervaques, she lived there for a great part of her life, with a stormy heart and peaceful surroundings; reminding herself of her friends in Paris by calling the trees of her park after them. Her connection with Chateaubriand lasted on and off till her

death, with the same variations as at first, of joy and despair. In counteracting the latter feeling she was not very successful, though she tried many means: now returning from a long drive (during which he had sulked) and attempting to shoot herself in her bedroom, in order, perhaps, to give him the opportunity of rescuing her; now venturing upon a homœopathic cure in the form of attachments to Canova and others. But, sweet or bitter, she was never indifferent, and René remained for eighteen years her ideal if not her only love.

Amongst his new friends of 1802, there was also Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre, his cousin, a widow, who kept to Pompadour traditions, yet was *dévoté* enough to convert M. de la Harpe in prison. We hear of her later, as the wife of the Marquis de Talaru, and the country neighbour of the orator Berryer, under Louis Philippe; her only protest against the growing bourgeoisie being an invincible adherence to the dress, the coaches, the manners of Louis XV.'s Court—in spite of her increasing years, which made a shepherdess's costume rather a matter of courage than of vanity. So far, indeed, did she carry her Court memories, that she was known to receive a certain gentleman,

who was calling one morning, in a mysteriously darkened room, where he could perceive nothing but the dim outline of a hat in a corner, whence her voice proceeded, accompanied by strange gurglings. It was only upon his dismissal, after a prolonged conversation, that he discovered the old Marquise was in her bath.

More serious, if less amusing, was the company of M. de Saint Martin, theosophist and Swedenborgian—a disciple of the celebrated mystic, Jacob Boehm. M. de Saint Martin was as famous for his eloquent talk as for his power of evoking spirits, and Chateaubriand was eager to know him. After many preparations, a dinner was arranged at which they were to meet. Chateaubriand arrived at six. The prophet was already at his post, but, unfortunately, not in the mood for prophecy. At seven, dinner began in dead silence; after half an hour's soup, another dish followed, the stillness only broken by oracular monosyllables from Saint Martin; course after course followed, and the spell was slowly broken. "Gradually kindling, he began to talk like an archangel; the more he talked, the more obscure his language became. Neveu (the third person present) had hinted, whilst pressing my hand, that we should see extraordinary things and hear

strange sounds. For six mortal hours I listened, and could discover nothing. At midnight the man of visions suddenly rose. I thought that the Spirit of Darkness or of Light would descend, and that bells would resound through the shadowy corridors ; but M. de Saint Martin declared he was exhausted and that we would resume the conversation another time. He put on his hat and departed." They never met again.

A wave of spiritualism, magnetism, and the like was passing over Paris at this time ; the natural accompaniment of its reactionary faith in the supernatural. But Chateaubriand's experience of such creeds was as futile as his interview with the Swedenborgian. He often met their apostles at Madame de Custine's. At one moment it is the hypnotising Abbé Furia, who boasted that he could kill a canary by magnetising it ; but the canary was the stronger of the two, and the Abbé, beside himself, had to retire for fear of being killed by it. On another occasion the phrenologist Gall sits next to him at dinner without knowing who he is, and gazing at his head assigns to him the attributes of a frog ; but on discovering his name, veers round and changes his diagnosis.

The most important of Chateaubriand's social



experiences was a party at Lucien Bonaparte's at which the Emperor was present, just after the publication of *Le Génie du Christianisme*. Napoleon, at once perceiving its author, moved towards him through the crowd, which opened to let him pass. In vain did Chateaubriand—so he tells us—attempt to hide himself behind his neighbours. Bonaparte raised his voice and called him by his name; the throng receded, and he was left face to face with the Emperor, who at once began talking about the religions of the East. Then, suddenly interrupting himself, he exclaimed—

“Christianity! why, the ‘Ideologues’ wish to make it into an astronomical system! Even if that were so, do they think they could persuade me that Christianity is a small matter? Christianity is only the allegory of the movement of the spheres, the geometry of the planets; and these strong minds may do their best: in spite of themselves, they have left greatness to *l’Infâme*.”

When he had thus spoken, he abruptly withdrew, looking back, as he walked amongst the crowd, with deeper glances at Chateaubriand than when he had first spoken to him—at least, so that writer tells us, thirty-six years afterwards. Napoleon, like Chateaubriand, was a

sentimentalist ; unlike Chateaubriand, he was also a colossal organiser ; an unscrupulous leader of men ; hence, perhaps, much of the complication which has made him such an enigma to posterity.

But it was his insight and not his sentiment which bore fruit—in this case no less than in others. His sister, Madame Bacciochi, and Fontanes told Chateaubriand of the favourable impression produced on the Emperor by his conversation ; though *he* declares that he never opened his lips ; that it only meant Napoleon was pleased with himself. The Emperor was—says Chateaubriand — “ a great discoverer of men ; but he wished them to possess talent for him alone, on condition that little was said about that talent ; jealous of all renown, he looked upon it as a usurpation of his own rights ; there must only be Napoleon in the universe.”

But this did not shackle his movements. He had discerned at a glance the gifts of his man, and discovery with him was practice. He lost no time in offering Chateaubriand the post of First Secretary to Cardinal Fesch—his uncle and his Ambassador at Rome. Pressed by an importunate clergy, Chateaubriand informs us that he accepted, chiefly swayed by his anxiety for Madame de Beaumont's failing health,

which he hoped the Italian climate might improve, if she fulfilled his plan of joining him in Rome. In case of catastrophes, he seemed anxious to provide himself with sufficient distraction, for at the same moment he warmly (though separately) invited both his wife and Madame de Custine to follow him there. Both refused, the former from wisdom, the latter from "outraged honour." "The thought of leaving you kills me!" he exclaimed, and proceeded to write her ten letters in the course of the few days that elapsed between his appointment and his departure, continuing the correspondence feverishly throughout his stay in Rome and Pauline's last days there.

Madame de Beaumont's end was indeed not far off; her short season of strength seemed over. Doubtless the prospect of parting from him had acted on her nerves. But there is a new note of bitterness in her letters at this period, which was not there before, and which we cannot help feeling was due to other causes. She had launched her "Savage," and had been the whole world to him; but, apart from the connection he had formed unknown to her, life and fame had now opened before him with their possibilities and distractions, and he no longer wished to be stationary in

intercourse. Besides, it was his nature to rush through his keener emotions at express speed, if their object showed any signs of returning them. Madame Récamier kept her spell over him for two-and-forty years because she never did so and remained no more than his calm, sometimes even phlegmatic friend. But Pauline had not the wisdom of indifference. All that she knew was that she was no longer the excitement of his existence; sentiment was turning into matter of course: a transition trying at all times to one of two people, but doubly so when the other is a genius who must pursue his own needs at all costs, and is endowed with a special gift of taking things for granted.

"Be certain," she says to the Jouberts, soon after Chateaubriand's departure, "that your friendship is perhaps the strongest tie which binds me to earth."

She seems very hopeless now. "The poor Swallow," she writes about this time, "is possessed by a sort of numbness, and very sad it is." Chateaubriand says that before he left France, she believed herself to be a doomed woman and often wept, although her friends were ignorant of this. Joubert is full of sympathy, counsel and encouragement. "It is impossible,"

he tells her, "that the vivacity which animates you with so constant a force should not belong to a perfectly preserved principle of vitality. Your mind has so worn out your poor machine that it is tired and overwrought."

Yet there were many breaks even then, in the gathering darkness. Her mind still took pleasure in all its customary interests. There were the letters from Rome, now almost delirious in their rapture over imperial monuments; now of a deep melancholy; now "unimaginably mad." He had been warmly received by Pius VII., who had *Le Génie du Christianisme* on his table, and impressed Chateaubriand by his face, "admirable, pale, sad, religious. All the tribulations of the Church are on his brow." Papal benedictions were unfortunately counterbalanced by official blunders. "The Savage" neglected to pay the proper calls at the proper seasons, and his excess of spontaneity in his ministerial life had to be rectified by Pauline's efforts and the intervention of Fontanes, who, alone of the group, possessed steady influence over Napoleon.

Fontanes and Pauline de Beaumont were not only making common ground over their idol's difficulties; they had been pursuing relations

of a more hostile kind. *Delphine* had just appeared in print, and Fontanes' dislike for poor Madame de Staël found vent in dwelling on the character of the heroine, supposed to be a portrait of herself. "'Delphine' is such a chatter-box," he wrote, "that she is always the first and the last to talk. In old days, these insupportable women who for ever want to be dominating conversation were called gossips; but since our manners have become perfect, it is thought right that a woman should become an orator in a drawing-room; and the more she fails in the proprieties and the duties of her sex, the more she is applauded. Such is 'Delphine.' This character exists and Madame de Staël can paint it, but she was wrong in thinking it would inspire interest. She talks of love like a Bacchante, of God like a Quaker, of death like a Grenadier, and of morals like a Sophist."

Pauline took pains to defend the "Whirlwind" against "The Wild Boar's" attack, and it may have been due to her zeal that Fontanes wrote so gloomily of her health. "It seems," he says, "as if all her energies had turned to irritation." He could give us no sadder picture of her exhaustion. Joubert's anxiety was also increasing, and his counsels at last determined her to try the

baths of Mont Dore. Perhaps he contrived to infuse some hope into her, for just before leaving, she writes more brightly, stirred by a meeting with Bernardin de St. Pierre.

"I arrive soon after dinner at Madame de Krüdner's; I find her with the *habitués* of her house established in her garden at a table. Near her was a woman with a sunburnt complexion, thick lips, and a very coarse, common look; a little farther there was an old man who had nothing very distinguished about him, if it were not for his floating hair; the little girl Krüdner, a regular rose, placed between the old man and her mother, was reading the famous novel in enchanting tones. Everybody tried to look vexed at the interruption, but nobody was so. Soon I learned what I had already expected, that the old man was Bernardin, the stout woman his wife, and a baby (also present) his child. I am very glad to have seen him, but I don't want to see him again. He received the honest compliments which I willingly made him with great simplicity. I was grateful to him. But I don't quite know up to what point his good-nature is good."

She has other diversions from illness; the assiduity of her admirer, Adrien de Lézay, only to

be explained, she says, by his having nothing to do ; but his attentions soon culminated in the explanation before referred to, and he passes out of her life without further comment.

Her sufferings were great enough to drive all else from her mind. It is miserable to read of her journey to Mont Dore, of the squalid inns, the insects, the coarse food, the jolting carriage ; the lady's maid, Madame Saint Germain, of whom she says : "She is unbearable in travelling—quite feckless. Everything useless is ready to her hand ; everything useful is missing ; she is always scared ; she neither knows how to add up a bill nor to give an order ; she wants to do everything—and that is impossible. Nothing is ever ready ; *I* grow impatient inwardly ; *she* loses her temper, and it all ends in a general calming down without any improvement." Pauline has, however, rather sprightlier travelling companions in the coach : "a sly old merchant, much absorbed in his own affairs, very little in those of others, polite nevertheless and full of sense ; a young man, a liar, a braggart, knowing everything, having been everywhere, having cut whole battalions to pieces, but not really understanding how to give an order to a postilion ; otherwise the best fellow in the world, brimming over with kind



attentions; there was nothing wanting to my diversion save a dupe from his gallantries; but my old merchant laughed in his sleeve, and my maid gaped in the air, or fell asleep."

The journey crushes her body and soul, and she needs all her courage to go on. She is grateful to a shrewish landlady for rousing her anger and "giving her a fillip." The "tedious, eternal Puy de Dôme"—all the mountains—exasperate her, and so does "the whole world" when it hears her cough, and asks that unanswerable platitude: "Madame est malade?" Now she is hurt at not getting letters from Joubert, her only reliable comfort; now she combats her terrible physical irritation by retiring to her room and counting the beams of the ceiling. She even stops several times in the middle of a letter to Joubert, that she may thus soothe herself. She is cheated about her rooms at Mont Dore; the dirt and the discomfort depress her; the climate is August one day, and January the next; her doctor is no worse than another, but she finds no companionship in him or elsewhere; she is "gloomy and sullen," she tells us, "like the weather, but never cold of heart." "This perpetual care of my health," she exclaims, "seems to me the most cruel of all maladies. M. de

Chazal may say what he likes—one cannot possibly send away a black thought when it haunts one. Would to God that it were only my imagination that was ill!”

She watches herself and recognises every symptom of her disease as it appears—especially the illusions to which consumptive patients are prone. “I cough less,” she writes, “but I think it is that I may die without noise, so much do I suffer otherwise; so annihilated do I feel.” Her journals at this time are indeed almost too sad to be remembered. One paragraph, however, in which she sums up her own character, has an interest apart from illness, though one recognises its influence in her morbidly acute introspection.

“Nobody has a better right than I to complain of nature. She has refused everything to me, and has yet given me the sense of all that I lack. There is no moment at which I do not feel the weight of the complete mediocrity to which I am condemned. I know that self-content and happiness are often the prize of this mediocrity of which I so bitterly complain; but as nature has not joined to it the gift of illusion, she has made it a torture to me. I am like a fallen angel who cannot forget what he has lost and has not the force

to regain it. This absolute want of illusion and of being carried away is my bane in a thousand ways. I judge myself as an indifferent person would judge me, and I see my friends as they are. My only merit is an extreme kindness, that is not active enough to be really useful, and from which all charm is taken away by the impatience of my character; it rather makes me suffer more from the sufferings of others than gives me the means to remedy them. In spite of that, I owe to it the few real enjoyments that I have had in my life; above all, my ignorance of envy, that common appendage of conscious mediocrity."

"Even if I had the strength," she says later, "to put the only possible end to my misery myself, I would not do so; I should be defeating my own aims, giving the measure of my suffering and leaving too painful a scar on the soul that I have deemed worthy to support me in my ills. I implore myself, with tears, to make this resolution—as stern as it is indispensable. Charlotte Corday declares that there is no act of devotion from which one does not get more enjoyment than one has had trouble in making up one's mind to it; but she was about to die, and I may live a long time. Where shall I hide myself? What tomb shall I choose, and how shall I prevent hope from pene-

trating there? To withdraw in silence, to let myself be forgotten, to bury myself for ever—such is the duty imposed upon me, which I hope to have the courage to accomplish.”

In spite of her convictions, the baths and the quiet began to effect some improvement. This good was unfortunately frustrated by her sudden decision to abandon her cure and go straight to Rome, instead of waiting as she had first intended. What prompted her it is impossible to conjecture. Perhaps some intuition warned her that if she waited, she would never see Chateaubriand again; perhaps some letter from him precipitated her journey. Joubert, as well as Chênédollé, Molé, Madame de Vintimille, and others, had given her rendezvous in Rome for some months later. But no former plans weighed with her. Fontanès raged and Joubert implored in vain; they felt the long journey would kill her, especially as a chill had overtaken her. Lucile alone understood, and tried no persuasion. Pauline's letters, she said, had given her a scorn for her own troubles; yet she felt convinced that her friend *could* not die, and touchingly tried to console Chateaubriand by this assurance. “I always see Madame de Beaumont full of life and youth,

almost without a body," she wrote; "no fatal suggestion about her can ever enter my heart." As for herself, she tells him that she knows he will find her mad on his return, a prediction too sadly verified.

## CHAPTER VI

**P**AULINE DE BEAUMONT managed somehow to survive the distress and discomfort of the journey, though the very servants at the inns were moved by her misery. Chateaubriand, detained by business at Rome, sent his friend Bertin to meet her half-way, and himself joined her at Florence. They arrived safely in Rome, and she established herself in the lodging he had found for her—a detached house, near the Piazza de Spagna, below the Pincian Hill; there was a little garden with espaliers of orange-trees, and a courtyard with a fig-tree in it. Here came all the adherents of the old régime to inquire after Pauline: Pope and cardinals, especially Cardinal Fesch, who was assiduous to the end.

At first their questions met with satisfactory answers. Chateaubriand had been greatly shocked by the change in her appearance; but whether from joy at reunion, or only from the soft climate,

she now had a short period of revival. She and her "Savage" used to take daily drives in the Campagna, now glowing in autumnal brown and gold, each influenced in their own way by its penetrating melancholy: he grandiloquently, as was his way; she silently and tenderly, as a woman nearing the end. And perhaps there was no fitter place for her to die in than the Eternal City, in which so many worlds have passed away and every stone is a symbol of the dead. But the improvement did not continue, and soon the drives had to cease. "The lamp has burnt out its oil," she declared. Their last long expedition was to Terni, where he tried to persuade her to come and see the waterfall. She sank down exhausted. "We must let the floods fall," she said quietly—and the words were a death-knell.

A few days later, they paid an October visit to the Coliseum. She was sitting on a stone: "Come, I am cold," she exclaimed, and rose to return home to the bed from which she was never to rise. She thought she should die on November 2nd, the *Jour des Morts*; then she fixed on the 4th, when a relation had died. When Chateaubriand told her she was superstitious, she tried to comfort him: "Oh yes, I

shall last longer," she replied; and for the moment he probably allowed himself to be cheated. He had not much time. That same day, the doctor asked to speak to him; he told him she must die within the next few days. When he returned to her, there were tears in his eyes. She smiled and held out her hand to him. "You are a child," she said; "were you not expecting it?" Weeping, he told her of her immediate doom, and implored her to see a priest. She was silent for a space, then, with a firm voice, she said, "I did not think it would be quite so soon. Well, I must really bid you farewell. Will you fetch the Abbé de Bonneviè?"

It may have been that the *Génie du Christianisme* had revealed a new faith to her, or that suffering had given her fresh points of view. At any rate, she told the priest when he came, that "she had always had in her heart a deep sense of religion, but that the unheard-of sorrows which had smitten her in the Revolution had for some time made her doubt God's justice; that she was ready to acknowledge her errors and to commend herself to Eternal Mercy; that she hoped anyhow that the ills she had suffered in this world would shorten her expiation in the other."

After hearing so much, Chateaubriand left the



room, and the Abbé stayed alone with her; presently he came out, wiping his eyes, and saying he had never seen such heroism or heard such beautiful language. He left her at peace; her only trouble was the thought of her will. "It was all done," she said, yet there was everything still to do, and she wished she might only have two hours more to see about it.

On the 4th she sent for the *Curé* to administer the sacrament, then looked up at Chateaubriand: "Are you pleased with me?" she asked him. A little later, the *Curé* arrived, and she took the communion, as was the custom, before a crowd of spectators, most of them curious or indifferent. The service over, they retired. She made Chateaubriand sit on the edge of her bed, and "spoke to him for half an hour of his affairs and intentions, with the greatest elevation of mind and the most touching friendship; above all, she begged him to live with his wife, and near Joubert." "Her counsels," he wrote directly afterwards, "will never vanish from my memory." Presently she asked him to open the window, and a ray of sunlight that came in seemed to rejoice her. She fell to recalling Savigny and their plans for a country retreat together, and began to cry. Soon after, he was fetched away

on business, and Bertin replaced him. Between two and three in the afternoon, he returned to find her worse. The signs of death appeared. "Soon after that," he wrote, "she closed her eyes and sank down on her pillow. I put my hand on her heart ; it beat no more."

So he tells us in the simple letter written immediately, under the stress of real feeling, to her brother-in-law, M. de Luzerne, and afterwards copied for intimate friends. In his *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, thirty-five years later, the scene is worked up in a much more elaborate way. The moral is almost pointed and the tale certainly adorned. She wishes to leave him her money—he refuses. "She grew tender over what she called my kindness for her. . . . A deplorable conviction came and overwhelmed me. I saw that only when Madame de Beaumont was drawing her last breath did she realise the true attachment I had for her. She did not cease to show her surprise, and seemed to die at once in despair and in rapture."

At this remote date, he could also look upon her actual death by his stage-footlight. The simple cessation of her heart's beating is changed to a description of the way in which she suddenly threw back her coverlet and let her eye wander ;

recognising his voice alone, and giving him a faint smile. He tells how he, the nurse, and the doctor held her in their arms; how her head drooped, and a lock of hair, coming uncurled, fell on her brow. "Eternal night," he concludes, "had descended. The doctor put a mirror and a candle to the lips of the stranger; the mirror was not in the least dimmed by the breath of life, and the flame of the candle did not flicker. All was over."

His emotion in 1838 was perhaps as sincere, if not as deep, as in 1803. But it was stale; he had used it like coin, for his own purposes, and worn the gold thin. It is possible also that the consistent artist cannot also be the consistent lover.

If Pauline was forgotten in her life, in her death she was certainly remembered. Chateaubriand was determined that her funeral should do honour to the last of the Montmorins. The Princess Borghese lent the funeral chariot of her family, Cardinal Fesch his carriage and livery, and all the French prelates in Rome assembled for the ceremony. Yet the centre of this pomp and ritual was no more than the slender form of a woman whose life had been simple, whose heart had rejected all form. She went to

her rest shrouded in the stuff that her brother had brought for her ball-dress, years before. Her servants could only find a piece of it, though she always carried it with her; they fastened it round her with a cornelian locket containing her father's hair.

The last honour paid her was by the Pope Leo XII., whom Chateaubriand saw long after kneeling in prayer at her tomb. This the latter erected himself in the Church of San Louis dei Francesi. There is a marble relief of her lying on her bed and pointing to the medallions of her family which hang above her. Over them is written the description of Rachel: "Noluit consolari, quia non sunt"; and on the marble is inscribed her favourite verse from Job: "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul?"

Underneath the relief is this legend:

D.O.M.

"After having seen all her family perish: her father, her mother, her two brothers, and her sister; Pauline de Montmorin, devoured by consumption, came to die in this foreign land. F. A. de Chateaubriand erected this monument to her memory."

Still simpler was her will. Her books she left to Chateaubriand; her bookcase and writing-desk to Joubert; her blue shawl to her brother's lady-love, Madame de Hocquart; her furniture, clothes, and a legacy to the Saint Germain (her maid and valet); and the rest of her money to her mother's old maid, who had so earnestly prayed that her faith might be restored. All the books she had borrowed were found duly ticketed on a shelf.

Chateaubriand was her executor; he undertook also to be the defender of her good name, no less than the painstaking accountant of his heart's expenses. After declaiming against the public slanders about both of them to Guéneau de Mussy: "The wretches!" he cries. "Have they not mixed up with their scandal the name of an adorable woman, my benefactress, and I dare now say a saint? 'Should not the author of *Le Génie du Christianisme* demand divorce?' they ask. Good! Death has come. What will they say now? . . . I have only one wish left: the wish for a little retreat where I can hide myself, and write the memoirs of my life before I die. . . . Madame de Beaumont's monument will cost me about nine thousand francs. I have sold all I possessed to pay part of it."

Needless to say that Chateaubriand's ever youthful heart was still full of wishes ; that a country retreat was impossible to him unless it was fitted up with every comfort and at least one adoring lady ; and that, in this case, it turned into the estate of Fervaques and the adulating love of its mistress, Madame de Custine. But he was still a hero to his friends. Fontanes writes in despair that Pauline's money has gone to her servants, and begs him to put in a claim for it. The valet, he says, when his legacy was announced to him, did not for one moment occupy himself with it ; whereas it would greatly help Chateaubriand's career. " I hope," he writes, " that at the foot of her grave you will find better lessons and clearer lights than any your remaining friends can give you. That amiable woman loved you : she will counsel you wisely. Her memory and your heart will keep you safely ; I don't feel anxious so long as you listen to both of them."

Prudence and tenderness seem strangely mixed here, and the prudence cannot but jar. But in extenuation, we must remember that this matter-of-factness and adherence to the present is characteristic of the French, and does not prevent depth of grief. The soul may be bereaved, but

they know that money is still important and false delicacy a useless tradition. And René, whatever parade he made of his nobility, remained truly noble in spirit. He did not touch the money, but acted on Madame de Beaumont's counsels and went straight back to his wife. His first act in Paris was to visit the cypress Pauline had planted in the garden of her old home in the Rue Plumet, and there he took his last farewell of her. Coming out, he characteristically met the proper dramatic effect; he was greeted by the news of the Duc d'Enghien's death, and straightway—as we know—renounced his post under Napoleon.

More sympathetic than Fontanes' is the letter written to him from Coppet by Madame de Staël :

“Heavens! my dear Francis (*sic*), by what pain was I seized when I got your letter. . . How can you talk of different opinions on religion and the Church? Can there be two opinions, when there is but one feeling? My dear Francis, remember the time when you had a warm friendship for me. I always felt, even in the midst of some differences, that I clung to her by all my fibres. . . . My dear Francis, give me a place in your life; I admire you, I love you; I loved her whom you mourn, I am a devoted friend—I will be a sister to you.”

That relationship between them was happily never fulfilled, nor did they draw much nearer to one another. At this point in the letter, she breaks off to make a digression about his work and his fame. "But how can I speak to you of your successes at such a moment?" she continues. "Yet *she* loved them, these successes; she found her glory in them. Continue to make illustrious him whom she so loved. . . . What heartrending words there are in your account. And your resolution to keep the poor Saint Germain woman. Bring her one day to my house. Farewell tenderly, farewell sorrowfully."

Chateaubriand had, in fact, taken both Madame Saint Germain and her husband into his service. It was the former who, refusing her legacy, went to live with Lucile in her solitary apartment; and the latter who, some time afterwards, made the only mourner at her funeral, when, sent by his master, he followed her coffin to the *Fosse Commune*, whence she was borne from the lodging where she died.

Chateaubriand gave tender directions that his own body should be borne to an impressive tomb on a Breton island, washed by the waves he loved; but for eloquent reasons connected with Christianity and equality, and best under-



stood by himself, he preferred to leave his sister in her humble grave. It mattered little to her, after all. No cheering ray had illumined her end, which had been hastened by Madame de Beaumont's death. She persisted in ascribing it to foul play, and died under this delusion. Long before this, she had refused ever to see Chênédollé, and the tragic news from Rome only came to him as a fresh loss, "deepening the shadow of a life which has long since become nothing but suffering to me." This he says in his letter of sympathy to Chateaubriand, ending in a strain of helpless pathos which is the keynote of his history.

"Two months ago, Madame de Caud suddenly ceased to write to me," he says; "it has caused me mortal pain, and yet I think I can reproach myself with no wrong towards her. But whatever she became, she could not take from me the devoted friendship that I shall dedicate to her all my life long. Fontanes and Joubert have also left off writing to me; thus those whom I love seem to have joined in forgetting me all at the same time."

Chateaubriand did not only receive letters from Pauline's intimates. They flowed in from her outside circle. The letter of stately family sympathy from Necker, as the friend of the

Montmorins, is none the less sincere for its slightly ministerial sorrow. Then there is one from Madame Krüdner, written just before the end, with all the heart she had.

"That sad sight is for ever before my eyes," she exclaims; "I know the secret of pain, and my soul always stands still in agony before the spirits to whom Nature has given the power of suffering more than others. I had hoped Madame de Beaumont would enjoy the privilege given her of being happier. . . . Ah! reassure me! Speak to me! Tell her that I love her sincerely, that I pray for her!"

We have purposely left the name of Joubert to the last. His sorrow was as still as it was deep; it cannot be sounded by words. Perhaps those from his own pen, in the last letter he wrote to her, will most fitly conclude their relations to each other. It was in answer to one from her so faintly written that it made him weep.

"I have not written to you—it is from grief," he says. . . . "I think I have never experienced a more sorrowful feeling than that which saddened me every morning when I awoke and (ever since your last letter) said to myself, 'Now she is out of France!' . . . In my trouble and my ill-humour I have broken off all intercourse with

the world. I leave the letters written to me to heap themselves up ; I do not even read them through ; I do not write any more. . . . My soul keeps its habits ; but it has lost the delight of them. You ask me to love you always. Alas ! can I do otherwise, whatever you are and whatever you wish ? . . . Farewell, cause of so much pain, you who have been to me the source of so much good."

He never recovered the spring of life, though he lived on as beloved and as loving as ever. The month of October, the period of Pauline's last illness, he kept sacred to her, as we have heard, retiring altogether from the world to mourn and to meditate. Years after, he lavished affection upon a girl (the daughter of his friend, Madame de Guitaut) because her name was Pauline. He made a romance of consolation—especially of the consoler, Madame de Vintimille. She gave him a miniature of Pauline to add to Madame Lebrun's portrait of her, already in his possession. Their relations were constant and unchanged until the end. He made new friends also : Madame de Guitaut, Mademoiselle de Chastenay, Madame de Chateaubriand ; whilst he kept up as constantly as ever with the circle of the Rue Neuve du Luxembourg. Of Chateau-

briand he naturally saw a great deal ; the lives of the two who had known Pauline best were indissolubly bound together. Fontanes — Grand Master of the University — was also frequently with him, and procured him a post on the Council of Education, where his fine judgment did solid service to the nation. To Chênédollé and de Mussy he was also faithful, no less than to Molé, who, always magisterial, ended as a potent Prefect in the provinces. But no one ever again filled his heart, or gave flavour to his life. Years after her death, he wrote of her to Molé :

“ Madame de Beaumont had pre-eminently one quality which neither amounts to a talent nor impresses any special form upon the mind, and yet places the soul on the level of the most brilliant gifts : namely, an admirable intelligence. She understood everything, and her mind nourished itself on thoughts, as her heart on feelings. . . . You will meet many women of mind in the world, but few who, like her, have the merit of enjoying it and not showing it off. She had fine judgment, and one could be sure that whatever had charm for her *was* exquisite, if not for the herd, at any rate for the chosen few.” Such was his last summary of her character.

He went on leading much the same outward

life, between summer hospitality at Villeneuve and his busy winter in Paris—a life with few changes, excepting a sharp illness about 1810, which confined him for many weary weeks to his bed. He called it his “beautiful malady,” because it brought him daily visits from his friends, both women and men, especially Madame de Chateaubriand, whose vivid talk passed the time agreeably for him. After this, his strength ebbed by slow degrees till 1824, when, surrounded by the books and friends he had always loved, he calmly passed away.

But if the Jouberts of the world who give out love, cannot recover from the loss of the loved one, it is different with the Chateaubriands who receive. For them the place *must* be filled, the sympathy given. René did not only rise from honour to honour—from the Ambassadorship at Rome to the Ambassadorship at London—but also, as we have seen, from love to love. Not long after Pauline's death, he again had fervent passages with Madame Custine. But her intensity soon wearied him of her, and he took a holiday in Spain to meet the Duchesse de Noailles. About 1807 began his real relations with Madame Récamier, to whom, for forty years, he came as a visitor from the outside, and

of whom he never wearied. With his wife he was always on affectionate though stormy terms. They had scenes—impossible to avoid with her sharp tongue and frequent temptations to jealousy; besides, she did not read his books. She preferred to build and manage a private hospital, giving herself more and more to this work. In some ways—in her warm activities, her merry malice, her fits of jealousy—she is not unlike Jane Welsh Carlyle. Like her too, she never failed in clever supervision of her husband's health and career, and, in return, it must be remembered that he made her an excellent sick-nurse when she was ill (a fact of which he did not cease to make the most), and was certainly a sincere mourner at her death, which occurred in 1847.

Yet it may be affirmed that none of his later flames really took the place of Pauline de Beaumont, the first true attachment of his heart: his Muse, bound up with the early days which are always the dearest. Perhaps this was vaguely in his mind when, writing of her, long afterwards, he said: "When I think that I have lived in the company of such minds, I am astonished that I am worth so little."

The egotistical humility of this tribute to the

dead must be forgiven him. It was much that he did not forget her. It is true that he left her tomb to be repaired by Pasquier; but in 1827, when he was Ambassador at Rome, he went alone to kneel there. "I visited," he wrote, "the monument of her who was the soul of a vanished society."

And it is there, with no companion but the memory of Pauline de Beaumont, that we will leave the genius who dominated her fate.

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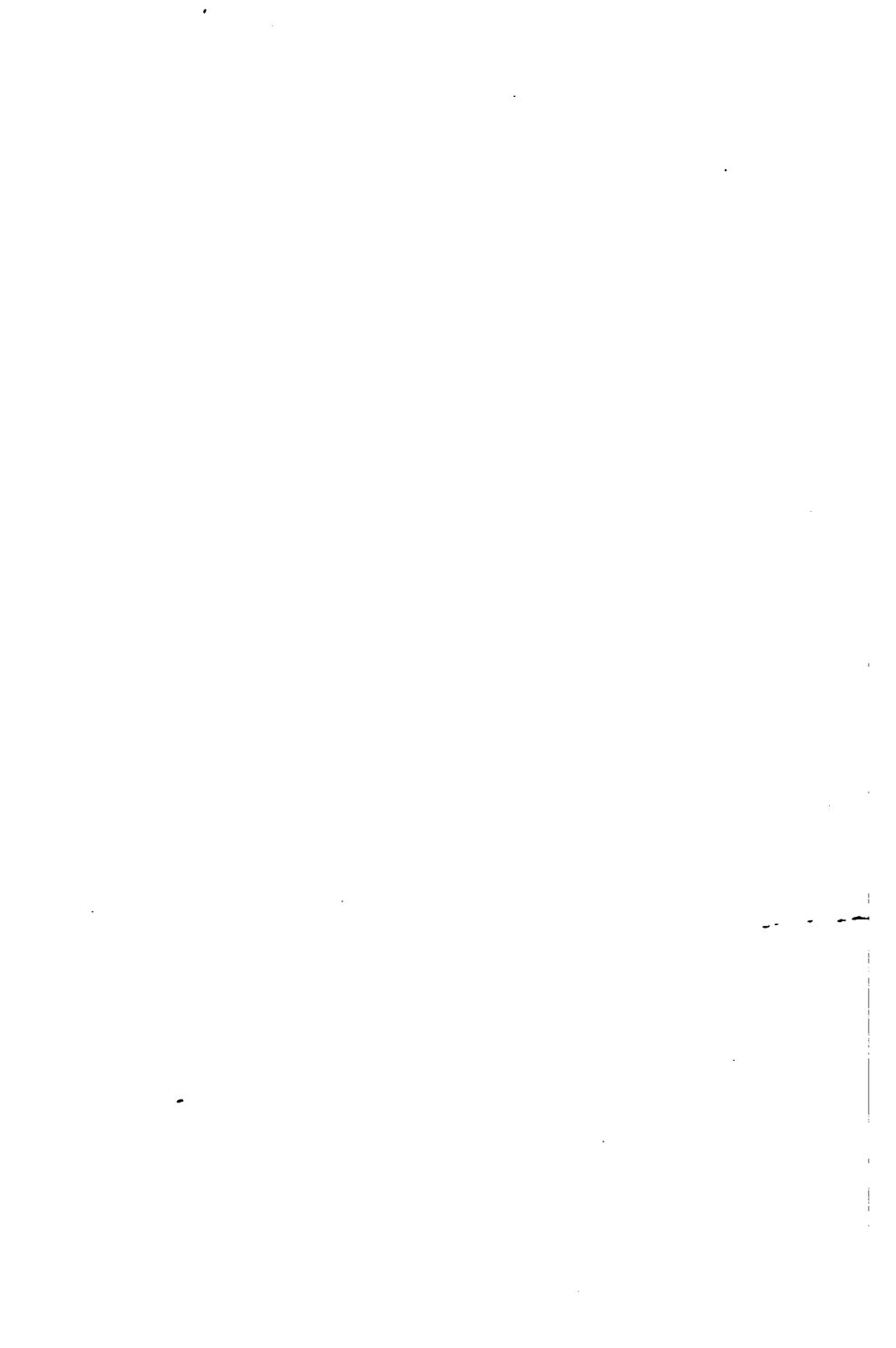
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